

A study exploring the reasons behind the gender gap in
senior management in Ireland.

Why the gender gap persists in the 21st Century

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Management.

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore the reasons behind the gender gap in senior leadership in Ireland, and why the 'Glass Ceiling' seems to remain impermeable in the 21st Century.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions and assumptions that may exist in relation to women's career advancement and assess whether any direct discrimination exists. According to the existing literature and research already carried out it is believed that a number of assumptions and unconscious bias exists with regards to women and childcare, and how this impacts on employment. Conventional thinking and traditional stereotypes form part of this unconscious bias towards women in the workplace. Some of this has stemmed from society historically placing women in the home as the carer, cook, cleaner, mother and wife and men as the providers. It has been proven that a greater level of gender diversity at top level management actually improves business performance but yet mandatory quotas have been introduced in many European countries on recommendation from the EC to increase the numbers of female representation on company boards.

This study was limited to respondents living in Ireland employed in middle management and focuses on the career decisions of men and women, their level of job satisfaction and whether their ambition and aspirations have been realised to the same degree. Another factor that will be looked at is the level of responsibility given to both genders in their employment. The author was also interested in the views and opinions of gender equality in the workplace in modern day organisations. A survey was carried out by the author of this dissertation in June 2015. This survey found that there is insufficient evidence to suggest that there is any difference between men and women in the aforementioned points however the stereotypical perceptions and somewhat conventional opinions in society continue to be present.

The researcher intended to contribute to the existing knowledge about gender inequality in employment and provide more details into the perceptions and assumptions of women in the workforce. Further research may include a study of the Generation Y females and how their attributes and values may deliver a new era of female leaders that will not encounter or tolerate the same degree of bias and could be the generation to shatter the glass ceiling.

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List of Abbreviations

IBEC	Irish Business and Employer Confederation
HBS	Harvard Business School
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
IBR	International Business Report
HEA	Higher Education Authority
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Society has historically placed women in the home as the carer, cook, cleaner, mother and wife, men as the providers, hunter gathers and the head of the family.

In 1955 there was an article published in 'House-keeping Monthly' which described how a "good wife" should act and was written as a guide for women to live by in order to keep their man happy, content and wanting for nothing. For generations this was the primary role of women and to be an exception to this stereotype was seen as rebellious and unacceptable (House-keeping Monthly, 1955).

The topic of this project is of particular interest to me as I have researched the phenomenon of the impenetrable “Glass Ceiling” that exists in employment however the theories put forward are unconvincing that this barrier can be explained predominantly by just one factor – Gender. Does discrimination actively exist in modern day Ireland based on gender or could it be a byproduct of conventional stereo-types and society’s traditional views of women as the primary care giver in the home which impedes their career progression. Some women may be limiting themselves by boxing themselves into a particular category, this may explain the phenomenon of ‘occupational socialisation’, applicants themselves only apply for jobs along the gender lines and may limit themselves to applications that are ‘perceived’ to be ‘female’ type roles. Some presumptions exist as to the reasons why women are not progressing to senior management roles - they are opting out to have children, they may leave the workforce or return on part-time, some have availed of flexible working arrangements and therefore sit outside of the normal promotion structures (Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014). Recent evidence reported by the European Commission (2014) shows that women make up just one-in-10 of the directors of publicly limited companies in Ireland.

1.1 Background and purpose of the work

While there is some evidence to support the theory of the gender pay gap in Ireland and internationally, there are too many variables that can be applied to this theory such as experience, education and seniority. For this reason I will focus my research on the perceived obstacles or “Glass Ceiling” that hinders career progression in females and examine the conventional wisdom that exists in society about women. I am also interested in the research carried out by Harvard Business School on the aspirations, values and ambition of both genders being equal upon commencing their careers however the comparison in how these goals are realized over time are very different when reviewed. Men tend to be more satisfied with their

jobs and have more financial responsibility and line reports than women (Ely *et al*, 2014). I will aim to assess whether similar findings are also apparent in Ireland and if there is any evidence to support the issue of the “Glass ceiling” effect. The primary view put forward by Harvard graduates that took part in the study as to the reason why women are not progressing to senior management was “prioritising family over career” (Ely *et al*, 2014). Further research carried out by HBS in 2003 on Deloitte & Touche LLP identified that it was not the case that women were “opting out” to care for children as the then CEO assumed was the obvious reason (Kanter and Roessner, 2003).

Female representation on boards and at senior level in organisations has been a topic of debate for many European Countries, Governments and various institutions for some time now, specifically over the last 15 years. The evidence shows that the number of women that are progressing to senior management level roles within organisations is grossly out of sync with that of their male counterparts. A number of campaigns have been undertaken by government ministers in the UK and Europe and celebrities are also advocating the movement for gender equality. HeForShe is an example of one such campaign - a solidarity movement for gender equality. Emma Watson, British actress, is Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women; she launched the campaign in September 2014 which aims to get men and boys to pledge to join the feminist fight for gender equality.

The importance of gender balance in leadership roles has been identified as a necessary strategy for optimal business performance. Reinert, Weigert & Winnefeld, (2015) found a positive association between female management representation and firm performance. In the research from 1999 – 2013 including the credit institutions in the Grand- Duchy of Luxemburg the economic effect is substantial: “A 10% increase of women in top management positions improves the bank's future return on equity by more than 3% p.a.” (Reinert et al, 2015).

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Scope of Literature Review

This chapter will outline the theory behind this research project through a review of the academic and relevant literature available in relation to the “Glass Ceiling”, women in

leadership and the theories and research in relation to gender diversity in employment and senior leadership. I will explore what the perceived obstacles that are preventing women from moving to the top of the promotion ladder through examining some key studies in the area of women's career progression. I will look at the newest evolving theory put forward by business professionals that gender-balanced leadership is a necessary requirement for business performance, the economy and for a better, inclusive and unbiased society (IBEC, 2015). I will examine whether enforcing regulatory quotas on businesses for female representation on boards is the right solution. Is the concept of the glass ceiling in existence primarily because of society's conventional stereotypes and perceptions? Surely a person's career success is defined by their skill, ambition, confidence and determination rather than simply their gender. This chapter will also look at the evidence produced on the difference in the expectations that young, ambitious women have when entering the workforce versus the reality that plays out in society through a HBS study and subsequent report entitled "Rethink what you 'know' about High-achieving women". There is a perception that women are "opting-out" of the workforce to prioritise family, can this be applied as the primary reason for the lower numbers of female representation on boards or is this an example of unconscious bias towards women in the workplace.

"The Glass Ceiling concept is defined as an unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities. The term was coined in the 1970s in the United States to describe the invisible artificial barriers, created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices, which block women from senior executive positions. Whether this glass ceiling occurs in the workplace or in politics it is essentially a reflection of social and economic gender inequality" (Wirth, 2001). The term is used to explain the evidence that has been presented by numerous studies that women are paid less than men for similar work and are less likely to progress to senior management within an organisation. Another term associated with women in the workforce is "opting out"; this is a term that was born in 2003 from an article titled "The Opt-Out Revolution" written by Lisa Belkin which explains those women leaving the workforce due to prioritizing family over their careers. Some women, as is the case with some men, may well make this choice and are happy to do so depending on their priorities and personal beliefs. Ely et al (2014) and Kanter and Rossner (2003) found that this reason cannot be applied as the primary explanation for the lack of female representation at senior level management across the US.

2.2 Women in Leadership

While a lot of progress has been made since the 1980's women still remain under represented in senior positions within corporate organisations and political forums. "Women make up just one-in-ten of the directors of publicly limited companies... just 16% of our TDs in Dail Eireann are women" (Mary Rose Burke, IBEC 2015). In May 2015 IBEC held a conference, along with the Department of Justice and Equality, on gender balanced leadership and presented this topic as a solution, not a problem. Among the discussions on the night was an awareness that gender balance is a strategic business issue not just a "women's issue". Gender balance has been proven to increase revenue, innovation and problem solving and the onus should be organisations to promote the need for change and create awareness.

Figures reported by Grant Thornton (IBR, 2014) "Women in Business: From classroom to boardroom", show women hold 24% of senior management roles globally. This figure has stagnated, the same result was reported in 2007, 2009 and 2012 yet the activity surrounding gender equality has only gained momentum through the years. While female representation is greater in particular industries such as education and social services whereby 51% of senior roles are held by women (Grant Thornton, IBR 2014) it is worrying that the global balance at the top is not more equally distributed. In March 2013 the Irish Independent reported: In Ireland a fifth of senior business roles are filled by women – even worse than the position four years ago. On International Women's Day 2013, further research from Recruitment Company Accreate found that just 8% of PLC board members in Ireland are women. The global average level of female representation on boards was 24%, with Ireland 36th out of 44 countries surveyed (Grant Thornton, IBR, 2013). It is argued by Wirth (2001) that the hurdles facing women in business, that aspire to senior leadership positions, can be so formidable that they sometimes abandon efforts to progress to the top. "Workplace culture and precedent can sometimes overwhelm an individual's spirit to progress if the attitudes towards women and men's social roles and behaviours are deep rooted in conventional stereo-types" (Wirth, 2001). Irelands results of female representation at board levels are at odds with that of the UK, Lord Davies of Abersoch published a ground breaking report into "Women on boards" (2011) and subsequently reported in 2014 the third annual progress report which showed that women now account for "20.7% of board positions in the FTSE100 companies. This result is up from 12.5%

in 2011 and 17.3% in 2013.” Lord Davies set a target back in 2011 for his country to achieve 25% female representation on boards by 2015, the European average. The figures reported to date for the UK are encouraging however it seems that Ireland, with only 8% of PLC board members being women (Grant Thornton IBR, 2013), has some way to go to achieve gender equality at the top table.

2.3 Education to boardroom

Education is the building block for any successful career; evidence now shows that there are more women studying in tertiary education than men with female participation in education soaring, particularly in emerging markets (Grant Thornton, IBR, 2014). Figures recorded by the Higher Education Authority in Ireland in 2006 – 2007 show that 49,375 women enrolled in full time, third level education in comparison to 34,888 men, nearly 15000 more women than men potentially graduating with a third level qualification. Numbers for 2014 – 2015 from the HEA, for full time students enrolled in third level education are substantially lower overall however the same trend is evident whereby females represent 6,707 of students and male student numbers are 50% less at just 3073 (HEA, 2014). It would seem that, in Ireland at least, there are significantly more highly educated women than men and therefore it could be argued, potentially more female candidates applying to, or available for, positions within Irish organisations. Despite this empirical argument, Grant Thornton’s, IBR 2014 survey results show that just 21% of businesses typical global graduate intake is women. This suggests that businesses are somehow closing themselves off to a huge pool of talent that could help their business to grow faster with improved performance, as certain studies have suggested (Reinert et al., 2015).

One paradox is evident when assessing the lack of women at the top, it is suggested that girls do better in the leaving certificate exam in Ireland than boys, it was reported in the Irish Times in August 2014 that “some 1730 students received a “Distinction” grade in the exam, 79 per cent of whom were girls” (Humphreys, 2014). This trend among female candidates continues a long tradition in Leaving Cert results and the figures for 2014 show an emerging trend of girls excelling in science and technology-related subjects. Will these findings be acknowledged by business leaders and translated into future appointments of more women in senior management and at director level within our organisations? Based on these results one

could argue that the foundations for potential success, based on higher levels of intelligence and education, may be more apparent in females than males in Ireland. To date the numbers of women progressing to positions of power in business and in politics in Ireland have increased however more progress is needed in order to harvest the talent available from this demographic of the population. The economy is investing highly in education, with women entering into higher education at double the numbers of men (HEA, 2006 and 2014) however it would seem that some businesses may be failing to realise the benefits and greater return on investment that could be achieved by increasing the gender balance in leadership.

2.4 *Ambitions versus reality*

Having examined female representation at senior management level in Ireland and internationally and assessing the higher education level of women versus men, this section will examine how individual's ambitions and goals for life are very similar yet can have different outcomes based on gender. HBS conducted a study of 25,000 MBA graduates over 20 years and published a report in 2014, "Rethink what you 'know' about high achieving women". In the study graduates were asked about their current values and hopes upon entering the workforce in which they have been trained to assume leadership positions (Ely et al., 2014). Graduates were also asked what their definitions of career success looked like and what their future aspirations were, how they thought their relationships may play out in the future regarding children and the importance of work-life balance. Many were surveyed again 10-20 years into their careers, these results were analysed and compared to their original aspirations and expectations. The desired professional achievements and expectations of many female graduates were unrealised, their hopes and visions for their future played out differently in real life.

The evidence in relation to men and women's career aspirations and expectations were similar in terms of what they value most and their hopes for the future. However how these dreams played out in real life were starkly different depending on gender in that men are more likely to have achieved their goals. The study found that men in full time employment tend to have direct reports, financial responsibility and be in senior management roles in comparison to the female graduates. This fact may also account for the reason that women scored 10-20% less than men on career satisfaction. In the initial results women rated the importance of

“opportunities for career progression and development” slightly higher than men yet the general widespread belief among graduates at senior management level is that women value career less (Ely et al, 2014). Taking these findings into consideration, given that women are no less ambitious than men and the importance of career progression and development opportunities were greater for the female population surveyed, women are still perceived to value career less. According to *The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't*, a study released by Catalyst (2007) this view has been cited as one of the key barriers to women’s advancement, known as “gender stereotyping”.

2.3 Perceptions and Assumptions of women in the workforce

This section will explore the unconscious bias that exists in society through assumptions based on traditional stereotypes. It will examine the perceived primary reason for women leaving the workforce; these perceptions may be masking a real issue of gender inequality in some organisations if the issues are not being investigated thoroughly.

An example of the damage of gender stereotyping was seen as the central point in the landmark 1989 case in America of *Price Waterhouse v Hopkins*, where Ann Hopkins sued her employer when she was not given a partnership. She eventually won her case in the Supreme Court. The evidence showed that everyone is unconsciously biased and there is strong evidence that men are biased against promoting women inside companies” (Evans, 2011). There are some assumptions that may exist among employers that women leave the workforce to care for their children, this is one such explanation put forward by Mike Cook, former CEO of Deloitte & Touche in 1991, Cook thought he already knew why women were leaving. He always expected somewhat higher turnover in women than men because, as he saw it,

“Men have two choices: they’ll work for us or they’ll work for somebody else. Women have three choices: they’ll work for us or they’ll work for somebody else or they’ll raise a family. And because they have that third choice, there will always be higher turnover in women than men” (Kanter and Rossner, 2003).

However when this theory was investigated further by an internal Task Force in 1992, there was no evidence to support the concept that women were “opting out” on mass to care for children. They found that Over 70% of the women who had left Deloitte were still employed full-time one year later. Another 20% were working part time at other firms. Fewer than 10% were at home with small children which is grossly out of sync with Cook’s presumption. Many

of the women who left were reported to have said “I feel like the minute I say I’m getting married or having a child, I’m written off” and “I don’t feel there’s anybody willing to invest in me” (Kanter and Rossner, 2003).

Cook had initiated a recruitment drive back in the early 80’s after recognising that more and more women were entering into the tax and accounting professions. He declared that Deloitte & Touche, market leading in their industry, would actively seek to recruit similar numbers of women into the firm to match the percentage of women graduating with relevant third level qualifications. He assumed that this would automatically address the issue of gender diversity at partnership level within the organisation in the next 10 or so years to come. In 1991 the figures showed that only 10% of the partners at his firm were women.

There was recognition by Cook that this was not a “gender” problem but a “business” problem, women were leaving the organisation at a higher rate than men, turnover was expensive, and the estimated cost of replacing an employee by Deloitte was put at 150% of annual compensation at the time. The company task force presented its findings in 1993 and implemented a strategy which identified three crucial areas to the advancement and retention of women, male dominated work environment, opportunity for career advancement and work/life balance (Kanter & Rossner, 2003). Through the findings presented in the case study conducted by Kanter and Rossner in 2003, *Deloitte & Touche (A): A Hole in the Pipeline*, and their own research, HBS learned essentially what Mike Cook’s task force did when they asked previous female graduates what their current status was “Only 11% are out of the workforce to care for children full-time” (Ely et al, 2014). However on analysis, it found that when asked what the number one barrier to women’s career advancement is, some 77% of HBS graduates believed it to be “prioritising family over work”. This confirms that the traditional thinking persists in relation to deep rooted attitudes about women as the primary caregiver in the home and is further supported by the findings that there is a belief that women value career less, despite the fact that both women and men set out with similar career priorities (Ely et al, 2014).

“The perception held by male managers that women are relatively poor problem-solvers, for example, can potentially undermine women’s interpersonal influence, making it more difficult for women leaders to persuade subordinates to follow their plans and directions” (Carli, 2001). If these stereotypical presumptions continue and unconscious bias continues unchecked and unchallenged in business and society, the cycle of the existing barriers to women’s career

advancement will remain. Within Employment Law, one case involving Trinity College Dublin found in favour of the claimant, Lisa Rodmell, as having been referred to as the "lady electrician" at an interview board (Enterprise Ireland, Recruitment and Selection guidelines). These are examples of unconscious bias and stereotypical presumptions that exist in society however continued awareness may help towards changing conventional perceptions and making society more 'conscious' of possible bias.

2.5 Flexible working options

This section will discuss the flexible work initiatives that some organisations have in place in order to support working mothers and provide greater work life balance. Some women see these options as a further stigma to contend with in the corporate world as availing of these options means the work can become less strategic or challenging.

Businesses may offer some supportive initiatives to facilitate different working patterns and arrangements that may be more beneficial to a working mother. The aim is to provide a better work/life balance however could these perceived "flexible work initiatives" actually be a barrier to career progression for women. The more "flexible" roles may tend to be viewed as less strategic and more likely to be part-time and lower paid. It could be viewed as a vicious circle rather than a supportive measure in business as the evidence presented in the HBS study 2014 by Ely *et al.* suggests that women may be doing more and more of the childcare due to the fact their careers are failing to advance. One HBS alumnae in her forties commented that "The flexible part-time roles I have taken [while raising my child]...have never been intellectually fulfilling." It could be argued that working part time, by nature limits career progression based on others view of the ability to do a role within part time hours. Both women and men in senior leadership roles were more likely than those in lower level management to have made career decisions to accommodate family yet the evidence shows that female HBS alumnae have not attained senior level positions at the same rate as men (Ely et al, 2014). Grant Thornton (IBR, 2014) found that, principally, 63% of businesses globally offer flexible working, of the respondent companies only 18% of businesses offer childcare vouchers to support working mothers with the ever increasing cost of childcare. Initiatives such as this, rather than getting more females candidates through the door, may help businesses to better support working mothers and retain key talent for greater gender diversity at senior, decision-making level.

One such theory is centered on changing society's attitudes about the role of the father. The New York Times reported in 2013 that working mothers on Wall Street with stay-at-home spouses have increased ten-fold over the past 30 years. "However, the reaction in Germany, a relatively liberal country in many regards, to the decision by Jörg Asmussen to leave the European Central Bank and take up a more junior position in the government in order to spend more time with his family shows there is still much work to be done to shift perceptions around the role of the father" (Kantor & Silver-Greenberg, 2013).

2.6 Good Business Sense

The rationale for encouraging better female representation in organisations goes far beyond an organisation's corporate responsibility mission and is underpinned by a sound business case, backed up by evidence-based research. Reinert et al (2015) found a positive association between female management representation and firm performance. In the research conducted from 1999 – 2013 the economic effect was substantial: "A 10% increase of women in top management positions improves the bank's future return on equity by more than 3% p.a." Previous evidence outlined that girls do better in the leaving cert and more women than men are entering into third level education in Ireland. However if women are not progressing throughout all levels of the corporate ladder then this will eventually have a negative impact on the economy. The evidence would suggest that women tend to be more highly educated than men and it could be argued therefore that women's attributes and contribution to the workforce can only improve a business. Businesses are failing to adequately harvest this crucial talent in the right ways, the practices that are present in organisations to develop and support women or talent for that matter have not been robust enough to recognise this gender gap issue or offer solutions.

The EU Commission in its 2020 Entrepreneurship Action Plan recognises that women "represent a large pool of entrepreneurial potential in Europe," as women represent over half of the European population (52%) however they only make up one third of all the business starters in the EU (GEM for Ireland, 2013). Cook and Glass (2011) found some evidence relating to positive increases in company stock prices as a reaction, to an announcement of a female being promoted to senior management. "Findings affirm a significant positive share-price increase for women of 1.03% ($p < .05$) and a non-significant positive share-price increase

for men of .60%. Contrary to our theoretical expectations, investors react positively to appointments of women in senior leadership positions” (Cook & Glass, 2011).

Having examined the evidence presented by Reinert et al (2015) and similar positive associations of business success found by Cook and Glass (2011) through the promotion of women it is clear, that there is a valid business case for exploring a more diverse mix of gender at senior management level. Should mandatory quotas be enforced in order to shatter the glass ceiling, will these quotas been seen as an artificial solution in obligating businesses to ensure equality and another stigma for women to contend with?

2.7 Regulatory Quotas – The way forward?

Mandatory quota’s for female representation on boards of directors has been introduced in Europe (European Commission, 2013) this type of approach has seen countries such as France, Spain and the UK developing their own initiatives and regulatory guidance for greater gender diversity at board level. Grant Thornton reported that there has been rising support from business leaders across the globe for the introduction of quotas, 37% in 2013 to 45% in 2014 (Grant Thornton, IBR, 2014). While legislative quotas have been successful in Iceland and Norway, achieving 48.9% and 41.9% female representation on boards respectively (European Commission, 2013) there is also a valid case put forward by The Minister for Women and Equalities, Maria Miller. When speaking on the third annual progress report, *Women on Boards 2014: 3 years on*, she recognised that “good progress is being made in Britain through a cultural shift that promotes on merit, not through the mandatory quotas advocated by others” (Vince and Miller, 2014). Figures in The European Commission Report on “Women and men in leadership positions in the European Union 2013; *A review of the situation and recent progress* reported that the highest levels of female representation on boards occurs in Finland (29.1%) and Latvia (29%). The Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Slovenia are the only other EU Member States to have at least 20% women on boards. That means that there are still nineteen Member States where men hold at least four out of every five board positions and in six of these - Romania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Portugal, and Malta – women hold less than one in ten positions (European Commission, 2013). The fact that not one EU Member State is close to the EU’s 40% objective would seem to support the argument for the roll out of regulatory quotas however Lord Davies argues that the voluntary approach is working in the UK and “companies have got the message that better balanced boards bring real business benefits” (Vince and Miller 2014).

While there is some supporting evidence that enacting legislation can improve the gender balance at a more senior level there remains a need for further assessment, the introduction of mandatory quotas could be viewed as further bias or yet another stigma for women to contend with. Why do we need to impose a regulation for an issue that is already established in employment legislation to prevent inequality in the work place? There is strong supporting evidence to suggest that the way forward is to convince organisations of the benefits of supporting and developing their female talent as it makes good business sense (Davidson and Burke, 2012) and appointments to senior level roles should be based on merits not through enforcement of mandatory quota's. Having assessed the findings I am in support of the statement from Evans (2011) "The advancement of women advances our society and according to researchers, it ultimately improves the bottom line" over the enforcement of mandatory quotas.

2.8 *Literature Review Conclusion*

The aim of the literature review is to demonstrate the existing literature on the topic, namely the phenomenon labeled "The Glass Ceiling" and to explore what the perceived barriers to women's career progression are. It is evident from the literature that there is a gender gap in senior management at board level, with poor female representation throughout the majority of Europe and the US. Numerous campaigns and governments initiatives have been introduced over the last 10 years to help promote the development and progression of women in the workplace and research has shown that increased number of female managers can enhance business performance. While progress is slow in achieving satisfactory gender balanced boards

it is encouraging to note there is very little evidence that can be solely linked to direct discrimination against women. The literature seems to point more towards the conventional stereotypes of women as the primary care-giver in the home as the over-riding assumption as to why women tend not to progress to more senior level roles. Also unconscious bias plays a big part in shaping opinions and maybe management decisions, the focus for organisations should be to promote diversity and be open to the mix of so-called “Masculine and feminine attributes” (Wirth, 2001). There were stark differences found in how men and women’s career aspirations and expectations play out in reality even though women tend to be no less ambitious than men yet women are still perceived to value career less (Ely et al, 2014). The literature clearly suggests that there is work to be done in addressing the various reasons behind why the gender gap persists and how to resolve the issue for the greater benefit of society and as argued by Reinert et al, (2015) and Cook and Glass (2011), the economy.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the reader with an overview about how the research was undertaken and outline the methods that were employed to collect the primary data from respondents. Firstly the research design and approach involves the development of the actual survey questionnaire, how the researcher selected the sample population and how best to analyse and interpret the data. Progress in achieving gender equality has been relatively slow in comparison to the amount of focus and attention the topic has been receiving over the last number of years. The research will attempt to examine the correlation between women in the workforce,

perceived barriers to their career progression and the views and opinions on gender equality from men and women.

3.2 *Research Question*

Why the gender gap exists in the 21st Century, A study exploring the reasons behind the gender gap in senior management in Ireland.

3.3 *Research Approach and Design*

To answer this research question I will seek to understand what the most common trends and perceptions are that have been acknowledged as possible barriers to women's career advancement. Through examining the research already carried out to date across Europe and the US I will compare the findings to Irish specific data. I will compare and contrast the responses of my sample's views and opinions on career progression and conventional stereotypes that may exist within society. Could inequality exist merely because of perceptions based on deep rooted conventional views of women and men's social roles and presumed behaviours? I will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to interpret the data from the survey responses of both men and women in middle management level positions in modern day Ireland. I will examine whether there are any similarities that can be applied to the findings discussed in the literature and assess the levels of ambition that exists in both genders, to progress their career. I have designed a questionnaire and asked 100 middle management level professionals to complete it, with honesty, in order to gain a greater insight into the current reality and opinions on gender equality. The sample group is from a variety of different industries and businesses as no specific sector was selected to focus on. Middle management level roles were selected as they will potentially want to or have intention to progress to senior leadership. I asked a total of 28 questions, the majority of which will be analysed using quantitative research methods, Bryman (2004) defines a quantitative piece of research as "emphasising quantification in the collection and analysis of data". The questionnaire employed for the purposes of this study involved a Likert type scale. However I have also had to present the findings of some specific questions through the method of qualitative research. Based on the nature of the phenomenon under study, an analysis of words and perceptions is required, it is important to apply qualitative analysis as some responses have been elaborated

on and explained in detail by the respondents. This method, it is argued, will embody a “view of social reality as a constantly changing property of individuals’ perceptions (Bryman, 2004).

3.4 Research Aims

The purpose of the research is to better understand the factors contributing to and affecting women’s career decisions and the perceived barriers to women’s career advancement that seem to persist in today’s society. The specific objective of this study is to explore if there is any hypothesis evident, other than the theory of gender discrimination, to help explain the reasons why women tend not to progress to more senior roles. Based on the preceding literature review and the survey question topics the following Hypotheses are presented:

- H1) Women’s aspirations and goals have not been realised to the same degree as men’s
- H2) Men tend to have line reports and financial responsibility more so than woman
- H3) Women tend to have lower job satisfaction
- H4) The No1 barrier to women’s career advancement is prioritising family over work

In order to test people’s unconscious bias I presented the last question in the survey as a scenario, there are 3 possible answers to choose from. The scenario is based on a situation that could commonly occur in recruitment, the respondents were asked to answer honestly whether they would think twice about offering a position to a woman who has recently married but has no children at present or a man of the same status. This question will assess whether bias exists in both genders, whether it is unconscious, absent or admitted discrimination based on gender.

3.5 Response Rate

From the 100 survey links distributed via email, 70 respondent’s completed the survey questionnaire. When the answers were collected it appeared that 3 of the respondents did not complete the questionnaire adequately enough to include their contribution in the final data. The results and subsequent analysis of findings are therefore based on a response rate of 67 individuals. I required both men and women to complete the survey in order to compare the answers and opinions of both genders. 45 women responded and 22 men, 67% of the respondents were female. Some respondents did not answer every question however those who did not respond have been taken into account in each of the presented findings in the next chapter.

3.4 *Research Limitations*

Due to the different upbringings, generational differences and personal life paths the respondents will have experienced, the results will be somewhat limited however for the purposes of gaining an insight into the general public's existing opinions and perceptions on equality, this sample group is sufficient. Some of the questions were left blank by respondents; this may be due to the contentious nature of the subject or a concern regarding confidentiality as there are some personal questions asked regarding job satisfaction and other employment related questions. There are also some limitations in using closed end questions as it does not allow for feedback however, where possible I have given the respondent the opportunity to explain their reasons for choosing a particular response.

3.5 *Data collection*

The survey was developed using SurveyMonkey, the online link was distributed to professional acquaintances, friends and family that met the demographic requirements and work colleagues, all of whom had previously agreed to participate. I chose this group as I have access to a large number of middle management level professionals through my role in HR within a large retail company in Ireland. This approach was adopted in order to effectively collect data from a range of sectors and personnel and gather individual viewpoints on gender equality.

The following business sectors are represented in the data: Human Resources, Retail, IT, Social Care, Education and Finance.

3.6 *Reflections on method choice*

When first planning my primary research the method I had in mind initially was a qualitative approach through interviewing a number of directors to gain insight into their personal experience and opinions. By interviewing top level management on their opinions of any possible barriers to women's career advancement it may not have been objective enough as they are all successful, high achieving professionals. I therefore decided that a survey would be the best approach in order to capture higher numbers of respondents and ensure a greater diversity and better insight into society's views. A mixed method approach was appropriate based on the different questions asked, as this research aims to investigate perceptions, values and measure aspirations a qualitative approach must also be included.

Chapter 4 – Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

To analyse the data gathered from the questionnaire the author used a statistical package for the social sciences, IBM SPSS version 22. As previously outlined the data was collected in surveymonkey and was exported to an excel spreadsheet on 18th June, the data was cleaned and prepared to then be imported to SPSS for tabulation and analysis. The main category findings in this section will be presented through a combination of visual methods of statistic display such as histograms and tables of descriptive statistics. Descriptive and Inferential statistics have been employed, inferential statistics employ data in order to draw inferences (derive conclusions) and descriptive statistics are not employed to make predictions, they use tables and graphs in order to display statistics (Sheskin, 2003). The use of histograms and non-

parametric tests has been adopted in order to present the findings and show the distribution of each dependent variable which is analysed based on gender, marital status and age. SPSS allows for survey findings to be interpreted and easily displayed.

A sample of middle management level employees was selected in order to assess the ambition and likelihood of progression to senior management level. For the purposes of this study middle management is defined as those who are classed as an individual contributor that is above the most junior position in an organisation or a manager of people which is below senior management level. In total 68 respondents took part in the survey. Sample is a set of subjects or objects which have been derived from population (Sheskin, 2003).

From excel other descriptive graphs and tables were used throughout this chapter to outline trends, results and the specific profiles of the demographic groups and to compare independent variables. The following sections will discuss the survey and data analysis and then present the findings in relation to, Aspirations realised, Job satisfaction, Line reports and financial responsibility.

4.2 Survey analysis

The purpose of the survey was to gather evidence and feedback into the area of career advancement from my target demographic, women in middle management level positions. In order to compare results it was important to also capture responses from males in similar roles in order to compare and analyse the data.

This study aimed to examine whether the concept of the ‘glass ceiling’ is alive in today’s society based on discrimination in relation to gender or whether, through a combination of conventional views and stereotypes, unconscious bias might be the cause. It may be that a person’s own self-belief, ambition, upbringing, confidence and determination actually influence their career progression rather than simply their gender?

The questionnaire was categorised into sections relating to personal information, to get an overview of the demographics of the group which included gender, marital status and education etc. The second section asked about their employment, personal experiences and appetite for

progression. The final section entitled 'In your view' included a number of direct questions relating to equality and a recruitment scenario. The areas of focus for the purposes of the study are men and women's aspirations, job satisfaction and level of responsibility in employment. Various other findings in relation to particular questions within the survey have been summarised in the findings chapter such as the perceived barrier to women's career advancement and respondent's expectations and priorities.

4.3 Data analysis

A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis has been used to interpret the data from the survey and the free text option that was available for certain questions. For the purposes of the quantitative analysis the Shapiro-Wilk test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the data. Data is considered to be normal, that is no difference exists if the values are larger than 0.05. (p value). As suggested by Sheskin (2003) the Null Hypothesis (H_0) equates to the distribution of both groups being identical. If p-value is <0.05 then the null hypothesis can be rejected, we can say we are 95% confident we did the right thing in rejecting the H_0 . If p-value >0.05 - then the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, meaning there is no significant difference between samples (Sheskin, 2003). If significant deviation from normality is found then a non-parametric test is required to test for the existence of significant differences between 2 groups or more. The different types of non-parametric tests that have been relied upon in this study are Mann-Whitney U tests (2 groups) and the Kruskal Wallis test (more than 2 groups).

4.4 General Statistics

Taking into account the 67 respondents who completed the questionnaire there was twice as many women participants as men. 45 women responded and 22 men, personal information was sought in order to give an overview of the demographic of the sample group. I have outlined the demographics of the participants in the below **Figures 1-3**, outlining the independent variables: gender, age, marital status and education level.

The theories that will be tested in this chapter will be analysed and compared based on independent grouped variables such as gender and marital status to assess whether there are differences in the outcomes of dependent variables such as job satisfaction for example. The researcher will assess whether these variables have impacted on particular survey results and whether conclusions can be drawn in that respect. Below is an overview of the 67 respondent's

demographics by gender, age group, marital status and education level. The majority of the respondents were females aged between 35 – 50 as shown in **Figure 1&2**.

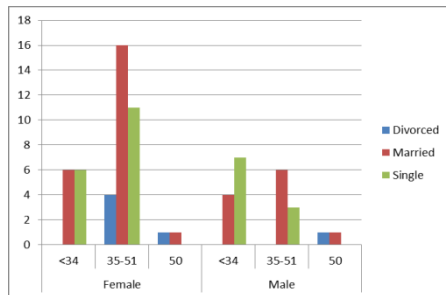


Figure 1: Gender Split by age and marital status

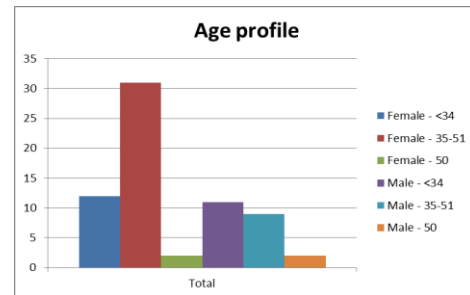


Figure 2: Age Profile of Sample

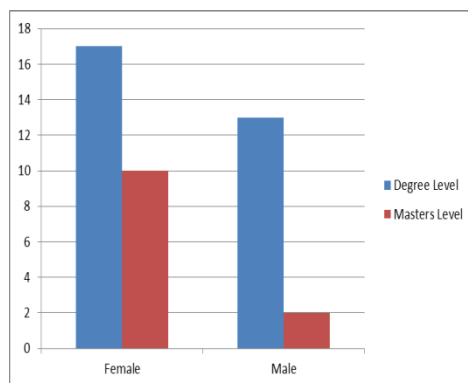


Figure 3: Education by Gender

Higher Education Level			
Gender	Degree Level	Masters Level	Grand Total
Female	17	10	27
Male	13	2	15
Grand Total	30	12	42

Table 1: Qualifications by Gender

Table 1 and **Figure 3** above shows that 42 of the 67 respondents (63%) indicated they have a third level degree qualification or higher. More women hold masters, 10 compared to just 2 men.

The next section presents the results of this study, with the results being broken down into four broad categories. The first category presents the findings of the possible factors that influence aspirations being achieved, the second category details the results of particular factors that may be present in determining whether someone has line reports and financial responsibility. The third category deals with the findings in respect of the factors that may impact on job satisfaction levels. Finally the area of perceptions and assumptions is looked at to assess what opinions exist in society regarding women in the workforce and their career advancement. With regards to these categories a presentation of results and characteristics of all statistical tests is presented. In particular, the results associated with tests of differences based on the independent variables: gender and marital status are presented in this section. The independent variable groups include Gender: Male, Female and Marital Status: Single, Married, Divorced.

4.5 Findings in respect of Ambition

This section presents the results of the possible factors that influence aspirations being achieved and tests whether any differences exist based on the independent variables gender and marital status.

H1) Women's aspirations and goals have not been realised to the same degree as men's
In order to test the hypothesis presented in the preceding chapter the following question was asked: Based on the aspirations and ambition you had for your career upon leaving school, have they been realised or achieved in your current life to date?

There were 4 possible rankings available as a response; Entirely, Mostly, Some or Not at all.

This study included a total of 58 respondents in middle management level roles, 18 Males and 40 Females. A case summary is presented in **Table 2** below; 'N' represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 4-6** are histograms of the distribution levels to which aspirations have been realized across the entire sample population, then by each gender respectively. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 5** outlines that 11 of the 18 males that responded have had their aspirations realised, either mostly or entirely.

Case Processing Summary							
		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
AspirationsRealised1	Male	18	81.8%	4	18.2%	22	100.0%
	Female	40	88.9%	5	11.1%	45	100.0%

Table 2: Gender Aspirations Realised Sample

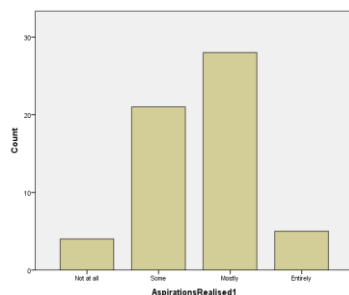


Figure 4: Total Distribution of Ambitions Realised

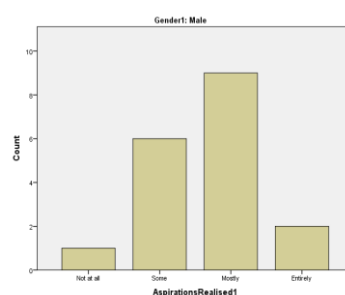


Figure 5: Ambitions Realised by Males

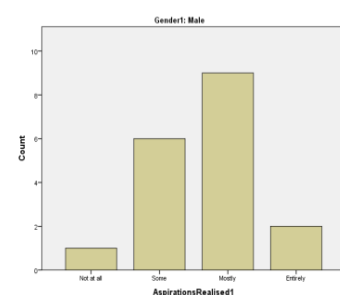


Figure 6: Ambitions Realised by Female

In **Table 3** below an overview is presented of the male and female associated descriptive statistics associated with aspirations realised.

Descriptives				
Gender1			Statistic	Std. Error
AspirationsRealised1	Male	Mean	2.67	.181
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound Upper Bound	2.29 3.05
		5% Trimmed Mean	2.69	
		Median	3.00	
		Variance	.588	
		Std. Deviation	.767	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	4	
		Range	3	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	-.196	.536
		Kurtosis	.102	1.038
	Female	Mean	2.55	.118
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound Upper Bound	2.31 2.79
		5% Trimmed Mean	2.56	
		Median	3.00	
		Variance	.562	
		Std. Deviation	.749	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	4	
		Range	3	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	-.179	.374
		Kurtosis	-.141	.733

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Aspirations Realised on Gender

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 4**, as previously outlined this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the male and female sample distributions. In both instances the results indicate significant deviations from normality ($W_{\text{MALE}} = .279$, $df = 18$, $p < .013$), ($W_{\text{FEMALE}} = .276$, $df = 40$, $p < .000$).

Tests of Normality						
Gender1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df
AspirationsRealised1	Male	.279	18	.001	.863	18
	Female	.276	40	.000	.847	40

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 4: Aspirations Realised Gender Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between the degree to which aspirations has been realised in both genders. From the output presented below in **Table 5 & 6** the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between aspirations being realised by men ($Mdn=31.11$) compared to women ($Mdn=28.78$), ($p=.595$).

Ranks				
	Gender1	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
AspirationsRealised1	Male	18	31.11	560.00
	Female	40	28.78	1151.00
	Total	58		

Table 5: Descriptive Ranks: Aspirations on Gender

Test Statistics ^a	
	AspirationsRealised1
Mann-Whitney U	331.000
Wilcoxon W	1151.000
Z	-.532
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.595

a. Grouping Variable: Gender1

Table 6: Inferential Results for the difference of Aspirations Realised by Gender

The next section will present the results of an analysis on the variable marital status, and whether it influences aspirations being achieved.

Aspirations Realised based on Marital Status

This study included a total of 58 respondents in middle management level roles, 24 single, 29 Married and 5 Divorced. A case summary is presented in **Table 7** below; ‘N’ represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 7-9** are histograms of the distribution levels to which aspirations have been realized across the entire sample population, split by marital status. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents.

Case Processing Summary							
		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
AspirationsRealised1	MaritalStatus1	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
AspirationsRealised1	Single	24	88.9%	3	11.1%	27	100.0%
	Married	29	85.3%	5	14.7%	34	100.0%
	Divorced	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	6	100.0%

Table 7: Marital Status Aspirations Realised Sample

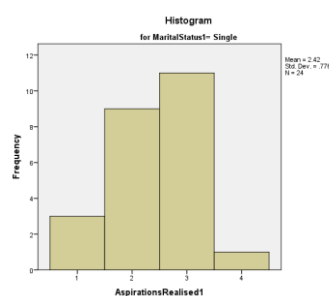


Figure 7: Aspirations Realised Single Status

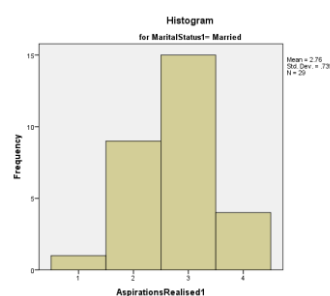


Figure 8: Aspirations Realised Married Status

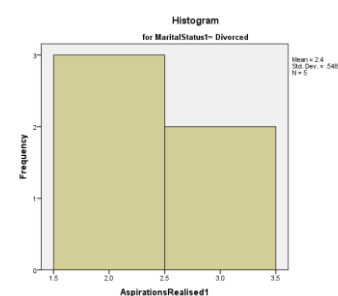


Figure 9: Aspirations Realised Divorced Status

In **Table 8** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics associated with aspirations realised by marital status.

Descriptives					
MaritalStatus1				Statistic	Std. Error
AspirationsRealised1	Single	Mean		2.42	.158
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.09	
			Upper Bound	2.74	
		5% Trimmed Mean		2.42	
		Median		2.50	
		Variance		.601	
		Std. Deviation		.776	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		4	
		Range		3	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		-.308	.472
		Kurtosis		-.327	.918
	Married	Mean		2.76	.137
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.48	
			Upper Bound	3.04	
		5% Trimmed Mean		2.77	
		Median		3.00	
		Variance		.547	
		Std. Deviation		.739	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		4	
		Range		3	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		-.143	.434
		Kurtosis		-.079	.845
	Divorced	Mean		2.40	.245
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.72	
			Upper Bound	3.08	
		5% Trimmed Mean		2.39	
		Median		2.00	
		Variance		.300	
		Std. Deviation		.548	
		Minimum		2	
		Maximum		3	
		Range		1	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		.609	.913
		Kurtosis		-3.333	2.000

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of Aspirations Realised by Marital Status

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 9**, this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the marital status sample distributions. In all instances the results indicate significant deviations from normality ($W_{\text{SINGLE}} = .274$, $df = 24$, $p < .002$), ($W_{\text{MARRIED}} = .283$, $df = 29$, $p < .001$) and ($W_{\text{DIVORCED}} = .367$, $df = 5$, $p < .006$).

Tests of Normality						
MaritalStatus1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
AspirationsRealised1	Single	.274	24	.000	.846	.002
	Married	.283	29	.000	.846	.001
	Divorced	.367	5	.026	.684	.006

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 9: Aspirations Realised Marital Status Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Kruskal Wallis test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between the degrees to which aspirations have been realised in each marital status group. From the output presented below in **Table 10 & 11** the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between aspirations being realised by single ($Mdn=26.38$), married ($Mdn=32.90$) or divorced people ($Mdn=24.80$), ($p=.242$).

Ranks			
	MaritalStatus1	N	Mean Rank
AspirationsRealised1	Single	24	26.38
	Married	29	32.90
	Divorced	5	24.80
	Total	58	

Table 10: Descriptive Ranks: Aspirations on Marital Status

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	AspirationsRealised1
Chi-Square	2.839
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.242

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable:
MaritalStatus1

Table 11: Inferential Results for the difference of Aspirations Realised by Marital Status

There were a number of other questions asked in order to gauge if there was any difference in the level of ambition between the genders.

Q.12. Do you want to progress from the role you are currently in?

Q.13 How likely do you think a promotion for you will be within your organization?

Possible answers were, Very likely, Likely, Unlikely and Very unlikely. This study included a total of 61 respondents in middle management level roles; results are shown in **Table 12 & 13**, 20 male respondents (100%) all want to progress. In comparison 9 women said no and 32 female respondents (78%) want career progression. When asked how likely promotion would be within their organization, female responses equated to 50:50 split regarding the likelihood of progression as shown in **Table 18**, the male responses indicated the likelihood of promotion with 63% responding as likely or very likely

Wants Promotion	Female	Male	Grand Total
No Response	4	2	6
No	9		9
Yes	32	20	52
Grand Total	45	22	67

Table 12: Ambition for career progression

Chance of Progression	Female	Male	Grand Total
No Response	3	3	6
Likely	17	9	26
Unlikely	15	6	21
Very likely	4	3	7
Very unlikely	6	1	7
Grand Total	45	22	67

Table 13: Likelihood of progression based on gender

The next section will present the results of an analysis of the particular factors that may influence whether someone has line reports and financial responsibility in employment.

4.6 Findings in respect of Employment

H2) Men tend to have line reports and financial responsibility more so than woman
 Respondents were asked about their current employment and whether they had line reports and financial responsibility. The test is relevant in order to measure whether any difference exists in the responsibility levels based on gender, marital status and age.

In order to test the hypothesis presented in the preceding chapter respondents were asked if they had line reports and financial responsibility.

Line Report Responsibility based on Gender

This study included a total of 62 respondents in middle management level roles, 20 Males and 42 Females. A case summary is presented in **Table 14** below; ‘N’ represents the numerical

sample linked to each variable. **Figures 10 - 12** are histograms of the distribution level of line reports across the entire sample population, then by each gender. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 11** outlines that 11 of the 20 males that responded have line reports.

Case Processing Summary						
		Cases				
		Valid		Missing		Total
Gender1		N	Percent	N	Percent	
LineReports1	Male	20	90.9%	2	9.1%	22
	Female	42	93.3%	3	6.7%	45

Table 14: Line Reports Gender Sample

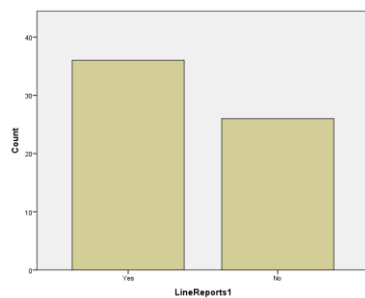


Figure 10: : Total Distribution of Line Reports

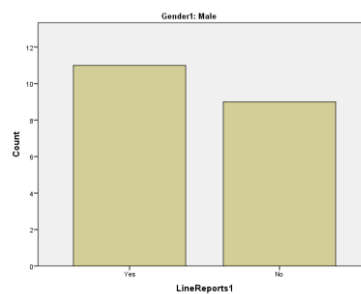


Figure 11: Male Distribution of Line Reports

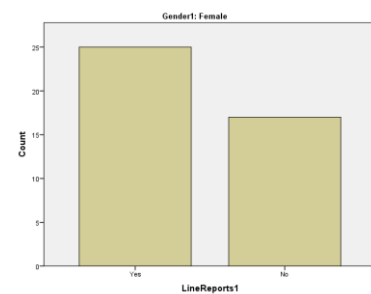


Figure 12: Female Distribution of Line Reports

In **Table 15** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics in relation to line reports based on gender.

Descriptives					
Gender1			Statistic	Std. Error	
LineReports1	Male	Mean		1.45	.114
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.21	
			Upper Bound	1.69	
		5% Trimmed Mean		1.44	
		Median		1.00	
		Variance		.261	
		Std. Deviation		.510	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		2	
		Range		1	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		.218	.512
		Kurtosis		-2.183	.992
	Female	Mean		1.40	.077
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.25	
			Upper Bound	1.56	
		5% Trimmed Mean		1.39	
		Median		1.00	
		Variance		.247	
		Std. Deviation		.497	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		2	
		Range		1	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		.403	.365
		Kurtosis		-1.932	.717

Table 15: Descriptive Statistics Line Reports on Gender

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 16**; this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the gender sample distributions. The results indicate significant deviations from normality in both instances ($W_{\text{MALE}} = .361$, $df = 20$, $p < .000$) and ($W_{\text{FEMALE}} = .388$, $df = 42$, $p < .000$).

Tests of Normality						
Gender1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
LineReports1	Male	.361	20	.000	.637	.000
	Female	.388	42	.000	.624	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 16: Line Reports Gender Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between line report responsibilities in both genders. From the output presented below in **Table 17 & 18** the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between line report responsibility of men ($Mdn=32.45$) compared to women ($Mdn=31.05$), ($p=.738$).

Ranks			
	Gender1	N	Mean Rank Sum of Ranks
LineReports1	Male	20	32.45 649.00
	Female	42	31.05 1304.00
	Total	62	

Table 17: Descriptive Ranks: Line Reports on Gender

Test Statistics ^a	
	LineReports1
Mann-Whitney U	401.000
Wilcoxon W	1304.000
Z	-.335
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.738

a. Grouping Variable: Gender1

Table 18: Inferential Results for differences in Gender that have Line Reports

The next section will present the results of an analysis on the variable marital status and whether it influences line report responsibility.

Line Report Responsibility based on Marital Status

This study included a total of 62 respondents in middle management level roles, 25 single, 32 married and 5 divorced. A case summary is presented in **Table 19** below; ‘N’ represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 13-15** are histograms of the distribution level of line reports across the entire sample population by marital status. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 14** outlines that 21 of the 32 married respondents have line reports.

Case Processing Summary							
		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
LineReports1	Single	25	92.6%	2	7.4%	27	100.0%
	Married	32	94.1%	2	5.9%	34	100.0%
	Divorced	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	6	100.0%

Table 19: Line Reports Marital Status Sample

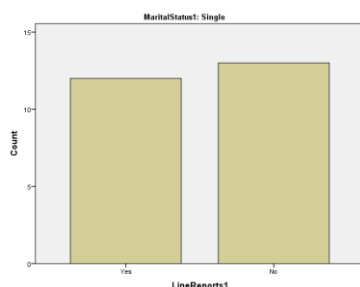


Figure 13: Line Reports for Single Status

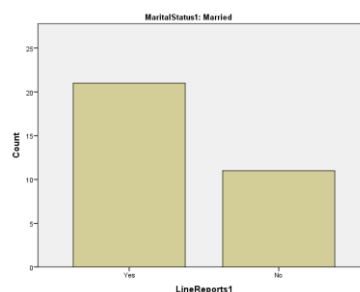


Figure 14: Line Reports for Married Status

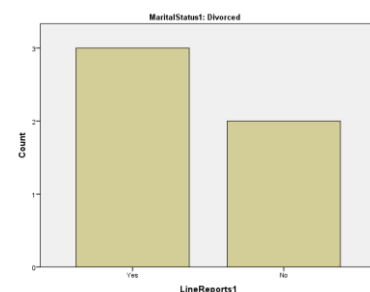


Figure 15: Line Reports for Divorced Status

In **Table 20** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics in relation to line reports based on marital status.

Descriptives				
MaritalStatus1			Statistic	Std. Error
LineReports1	Single	Mean	1.52	.102
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.31
			Upper Bound	1.73
		5% Trimmed Mean	1.52	
		Median	2.00	
		Variance	.260	
		Std. Deviation	.510	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	2	
		Range	1	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	-.085	.464
		Kurtosis	-2.174	.902
	Married	Mean	1.34	.085
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.17
			Upper Bound	1.52
		5% Trimmed Mean	1.33	
		Median	1.00	
		Variance	.233	
		Std. Deviation	.483	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	2	
		Range	1	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	.691	.414
		Kurtosis	-1.629	.809
	Divorced	Mean	1.40	.245
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	.72
			Upper Bound	2.08
		5% Trimmed Mean	1.39	
		Median	1.00	
		Variance	.300	
		Std. Deviation	.548	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	2	
		Range	1	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	.609	.913
		Kurtosis	-3.333	2.000

Table 20: Descriptive Statistics Line Reports on Marital Status

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 21**; this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the marital status sample distributions. The results indicate significant deviations from normality in all instances ($W_{\text{SINGLE}} = .347$, $df = 25$, $p < .000$), ($W_{\text{MARRIED}} = .418$, $df = 32$, $p < .000$) and ($W_{\text{DIVORCED}} = .367$, $df = 5$, $p < .006$).

Tests of Normality						
MaritalStatus1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
LineReports1	Single	.347	25	.000	.639	.000
	Married	.418	32	.000	.602	.000
	Divorced	.367	5	.026	.684	.006

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 21: Line Reports Marital Status Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Kruskal Wallis test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between the line report responsibilities in each marital status group. From the output presented below in **Table 22 & 23** the non-parametric Kruskal

Wallis test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between line report responsibility of single (**Mdn=34.62**), married (**Mdn=29.16**) or divorced people (**Mdn=30.90**), (**p=.413**).

Ranks			
	MaritalStatus1	N	Mean Rank
LineReports1	Single	25	34.62
	Married	32	29.16
	Divorced	5	30.90
	Total	62	

Table 22: Descriptive Ranks: Line Reports on Marital Status

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	LineReports1
Chi-Square	1.770
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.413

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable:
MaritalStatus1

Table 23: Inferential Results for differences in Line Report Responsibility for Marital Status

The next section will present the results of an analysis of the particular factors that may influence whether someone has financial responsibility in their role

Financial Responsibility based on Gender

This study included a total of 62 respondents in middle management level roles, 20 Males and 42 Females. A case summary is presented in **Table 24** below; ‘N’ represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 16-18** are histograms of the distribution level of financial responsibility across the entire sample population, then by each gender. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 17** outlines that 14 of the 20 males that responded have financial responsibility.

Case Processing Summary							
		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
FinancialResponsibility1	Male	20	90.9%	2	9.1%	22	100.0%
	Female	42	93.3%	3	6.7%	45	100.0%

Table 24: Financial Responsibility Gender Sample

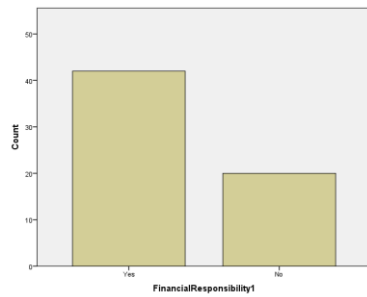


Figure 16: Distribution of Financial Responsibility

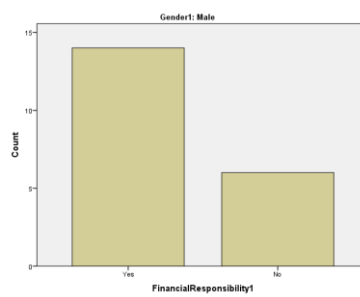


Figure 17: Males with Financial Responsibility

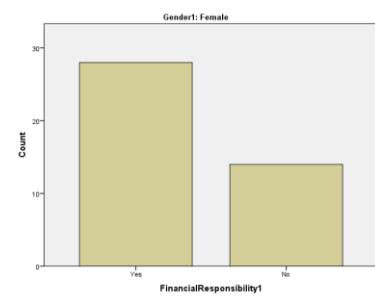


Figure 18: Females Financial Responsibility

In **Table 25** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics in relation to financial responsibility based on gender.

Descriptives				
Gender1			Statistic	Std. Error
FinancialResponsibility1	Male	Mean	1.30	.105
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.08
			Upper Bound	1.52
		5% Trimmed Mean	1.28	
		Median	1.00	
		Variance	.221	
		Std. Deviation	.470	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	2	
		Range	1	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	.945	.512
		Kurtosis	-1.242	.992
	Female	Mean	1.33	.074
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.18
			Upper Bound	1.48
		5% Trimmed Mean	1.31	
		Median	1.00	
		Variance	.228	
		Std. Deviation	.477	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	2	
		Range	1	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	.734	.365
		Kurtosis	-1.537	.717

Table 25: Descriptive Statistics Financial Responsibility on Gender

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 26**; this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the gender sample distributions. The results indicate significant deviations from normality in both instances ($W_{\text{MALE}} = .438$, $df = 20$, $p < .000$) and ($W_{\text{FEMALE}} = .424$, $df = 42$, $p < .000$).

Tests of Normality							
Gender1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
FinancialResponsibility1	Male	.438	20	.000	.580	20	.000
	Female	.424	42	.000	.595	42	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 26: Financial Responsibility Gender Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between financial responsibilities in both genders. From the output presented below in **Table 27 & 28** the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between financial responsibility of men (**Mdn=30.80**) compared to women (**Mdn=31.83**), (**p=.795**).

Ranks				
Gender1	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
FinancialResponsibility1 Male	20	30.80	616.00	
Female	42	31.83	1337.00	
Total	62			

Table 27: Descriptive Ranks: Financial by Gender

Test Statistics ^a	
	FinancialResponsibility1
Mann-Whitney U	406.000
Wilcoxon W	616.000
Z	-.260
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.795

a. Grouping Variable: Gender1

Table 28: Inferential Results for differences in Financial Responsibility by Gender

The next section will present the results of an analysis on the variable marital status and whether it influences financial responsibility.

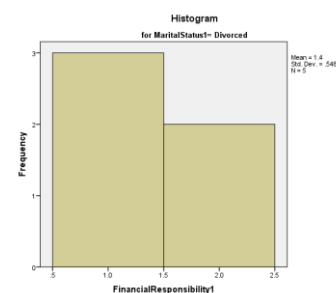
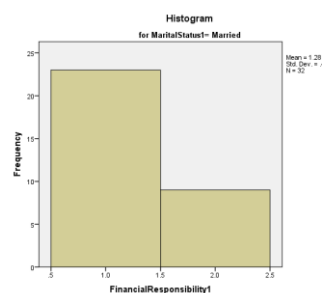
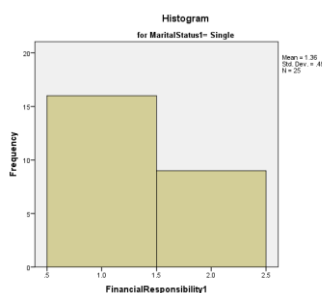
Financial Responsibility based on Marital Status

This study included a total of 62 respondents in middle management level roles, 25 single, 32 married and 5 divorced. A case summary is presented in **Table 29** below; 'N' represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 19-21** are histograms of the distribution level of line reports across the entire sample population by marital status. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 20** outlines that 23 of the 32 married respondents have financial responsibility.

Case Processing Summary

		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
FinancialResponsibility1	Single	25	92.6%	2	7.4%	27	100.0%
	Married	32	94.1%	2	5.9%	34	100.0%
	Divorced	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	6	100.0%

Table 29: Financial Responsibility Marital Status Sample



In **Table 30** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics in relation to financial responsibility based on marital status.

Descriptives

MaritalStatus1				Statistic	Std. Error
FinancialResponsibility1	Single	Mean		1.36	.098
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.16	
			Upper Bound	1.56	
		5% Trimmed Mean		1.34	
		Median		1.00	
		Variance		.240	
		Std. Deviation		.490	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		2	
		Range		1	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		.621	.464
		Kurtosis		-1.762	.902
	Married	Mean		1.28	.081
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.12	
			Upper Bound	1.45	
		5% Trimmed Mean		1.26	
		Median		1.00	
		Variance		.209	
		Std. Deviation		.457	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		2	
		Range		1	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		1.022	.414
		Kurtosis		-1.025	.809
	Divorced	Mean		1.40	.245
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	.72	
			Upper Bound	2.08	
		5% Trimmed Mean		1.39	
		Median		1.00	
		Variance		.300	
		Std. Deviation		.548	
		Minimum		1	
		Maximum		2	
		Range		1	
		Interquartile Range		1	
		Skewness		.609	.913
		Kurtosis		-3.333	2.000

Table 30: Descriptive Statistics Financial on Marital Status

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 31**; this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the marital status sample distributions. The results indicate significant deviations from normality in all instances ($W_{\text{SINGLE}} = .409$, $df = 25$, $p < .000$), ($W_{\text{MARRIED}} = .450$, $df = 32$, $p < .000$) and ($W_{\text{DIVORCED}} = .367$, $df = 5$, $p < .006$).

Tests of Normality						
MaritalStatus1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
FinancialResponsibility1	Single	.409	25	.000	.610	.000
	Married	.450	32	.000	.565	.000
	Divorced	.367	5	.026	.684	.006

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 31: Financial Marital Status Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Kruskal Wallis test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between the financial responsibilities in each marital status group. From the output presented below in **Table 32 & 33** the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between aspirations being realised by single ($Mdn=32.66$), married ($Mdn=30.22$) or divorced people ($Mdn=33.90$), ($p=.764$).

Ranks			
FinancialResponsibility1	MaritalStatus1	N	Mean Rank
	Single	25	32.66
	Married	32	30.22
	Divorced	5	33.90
	Total	62	

Table 32: Descriptive Ranks: Financial by Marital Status

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	FinancialResponsibility1
Chi-Square	.539
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.764

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable:
MaritalStatus1

Table 33: Inferential Results for differences in Financial Responsibility by Marital Status

The next section will present the results of an analysis of the particular factors that may influence a person's job satisfaction.

H3) Women tend to have lower job satisfaction

The findings of the HBS survey spanning a sample of over 25,000 graduates found that “Men tend to be more satisfied with their jobs” (Ely et al., 2014). The test is relevant in order to measure whether any difference exists in relation to job satisfaction based on gender, marital status and age. The following answers were available in response to the question of how satisfied are you in your current role: Very satisfied, Satisfied, Unsatisfied and Very Unsatisfied.

Job Satisfaction based on Gender

This study included a total of 61 respondents in middle management level roles, 20 Males and 41 Females, 6 respondents failed to answer. A case summary is presented in **Table 34** below; ‘N’ represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 22-24** are histograms of the distribution level of job satisfaction across the entire sample population, then by each gender. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 23** outlines that 10 of the 20 males that responded are satisfied in their current role.

Case Processing Summary							
		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Satisfaction1	Male	20	90.9%	2	9.1%	22	100.0%
	Female	41	91.1%	4	8.9%	45	100.0%

Table 34: Job Satisfaction Gender Sample

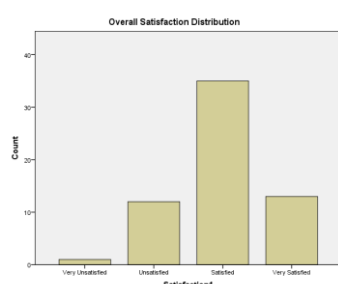


Figure 22: Overall Job Satisfaction Levels

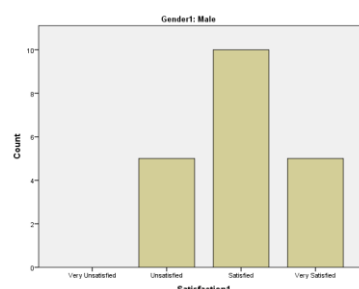


Figure 23: Male Job Satisfaction Levels

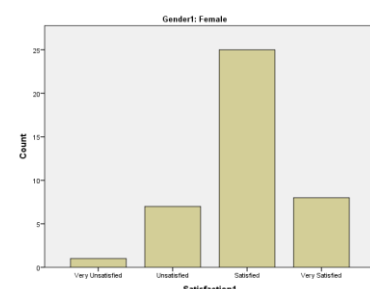


Figure 24: Female Job Satisfaction Levels

In **Table 35** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics in relation to job satisfaction based on gender.

Descriptives						
Gender1				Statistic	Std. Error	
Satisfaction1	Male	Mean			3.00	.162
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.66		
			Upper Bound	3.34		
		5% Trimmed Mean			3.00	
		Median			3.00	
		Variance			.526	
		Std. Deviation			.725	
		Minimum			2	
		Maximum			4	
		Range			2	
		Interquartile Range			2	
		Skewness			.000	.512
		Kurtosis			-.931	.992
	Female	Mean			2.98	.108
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.76		
			Upper Bound	3.19		
		5% Trimmed Mean			3.00	
		Median			3.00	
		Variance			.474	
		Std. Deviation			.689	
		Minimum			1	
		Maximum			4	
		Range			3	
		Interquartile Range			0	
		Skewness			-.451	.369
		Kurtosis			.683	.724

Table 35: Descriptive Statistics Job Satisfaction on Gender

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 36**; this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the gender sample distributions. The results indicate significant deviations from normality in both instances ($W_{\text{MALE}} = .250$, $df = 20$, $p < .001$) and ($W_{\text{FEMALE}} = .319$, $df = 41$, $p < .000$).

Tests of Normality						
Gender1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
Satisfaction1	Male	.250	20	.002	.815	.001
	Female	.319	41	.000	.806	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 36: Job Satisfaction Gender Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between job satisfactions in both genders. From the output presented below in **Table 37 & 38** the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between job satisfaction of men ($Mdn=31.13$) compared to women ($Mdn=30.94$), ($p=.966$).

Ranks			
	Gender1	N	Mean Rank
Satisfaction1	Male	20	31.13
	Female	41	30.94
	Total	61	

Table 37: Descriptive Ranks Job Satisfaction on Gender

Test Statistics ^a	
	Satisfaction1
Mann-Whitney U	407.500
Wilcoxon W	1268.500
Z	-.043
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.966

a. Grouping Variable: Gender1

Table 38: Inferential Results for Differences in Satisfaction based on Gender

The next section will present the results of an analysis on the variable marital status and whether it influences job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction based on Marital Status

This study included a total of 61 respondents in middle management level roles, 24 single, 32 married and 5 divorced, 6 respondents failed to answer. A case summary is presented in **Table 39** below; ‘N’ represents the numerical sample linked to each variable. **Figures 25-27** are histograms of the distribution level of job satisfaction across the entire sample population by marital status. In all cases the horizontal axis represents the responses to the question and the vertical axis represents the number of respondents. For example, **Figure 26** outlines that 20 of the 32 married respondents are satisfied in their roles.

Case Processing Summary						
MaritalStatus1		Cases				
		Valid		Missing		Total
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Satisfaction1	Single	24	88.9%	3	11.1%	27
	Married	32	94.1%	2	5.9%	34
	Divorced	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	6

Table 39: Job Satisfaction Marital Status Sample

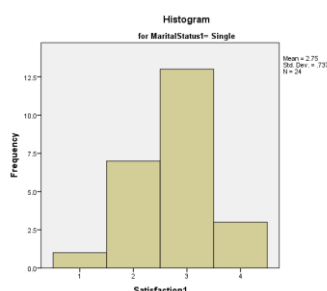


Figure 25: Job Satisfaction Single Status

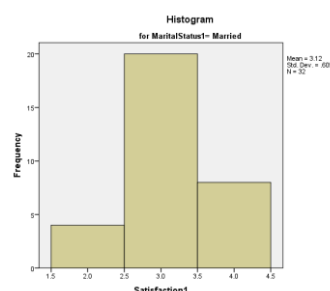


Figure 26: Job Satisfaction Married Status

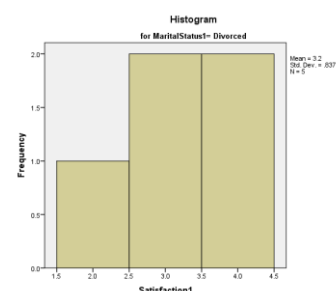


Figure 27: Job Satisfaction Divorced Status

In **Table 40** below an overview is presented of all associated descriptive statistics in relation to job satisfaction based on marital status.

Descriptives				
MaritalStatus1			Statistic	Std. Error
Satisfaction1	Single	Mean	2.75	.150
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	2.44	
			3.06	
		5% Trimmed Mean	2.77	
		Median	3.00	
		Variance	.543	
		Std. Deviation	.737	
		Minimum	1	
		Maximum	4	
		Range	3	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	-.266	.472
		Kurtosis	.191	.918
	Married	Mean	3.13	.108
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	2.91	
			3.34	
		5% Trimmed Mean	3.14	
		Median	3.00	
		Variance	.371	
		Std. Deviation	.609	
		Minimum	2	
		Maximum	4	
		Range	2	
		Interquartile Range	1	
		Skewness	-.057	.414
		Kurtosis	-.155	.809
	Divorced	Mean	3.20	.374
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	2.16	
			4.24	
		5% Trimmed Mean	3.22	
		Median	3.00	
		Variance	.700	
		Std. Deviation	.837	
		Minimum	2	
		Maximum	4	
		Range	2	
		Interquartile Range	2	
		Skewness	-.512	.913
		Kurtosis	-.612	2.000

Table 40: Job Satisfaction on Marital Status

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality are presented in **Table 41**; this test was performed and relied upon to examine the normality of the marital status sample distributions. The results indicate significant deviations from normality in 2 instances ($W_{\text{SINGLE}} = .299$, $df = 24$, $p < .002$) and ($W_{\text{MARRIED}} = .331$, $df = 32$, $p < .000$).

Tests of Normality						
MaritalStatus1		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
Satisfaction1	Single	.299	24	.000	.844	.002
	Married	.331	32	.000	.767	.000
	Divorced	.231	5	.200 [*]	.881	.314

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 41: Job Satisfaction Marital Status Normality Results

Based on the results of the normality test the Kruskal Wallis test was employed to test for any significant differences that may exist between the job satisfactions in each marital status group.

From the output presented below in **Table 42 & 43** the non-parametric Kruskal Wallis test results are shown. The results present as no difference between the mean ranks, there is no significant differences between job satisfaction of single (**Mdn=25.90**), married (**Mdn=34.06**) or divorced people (**Mdn=35.90**), (**p=.124**).

Ranks			
	MaritalStatus1	N	Mean Rank
Satisfaction1	Single	24	25.90
	Married	32	34.06
	Divorced	5	35.90
	Total	61	

Table 42: Descriptive Ranks: Job satisfaction on Marital Status

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	Satisfaction1
Chi-Square	4.178
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.124

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable:
MaritalStatus1

Table 43: Inferential Results for differences in Job Satisfaction for Marital Status

In order to assess what the current reality is in relation to gender balance at senior level in Irish organisations in today's society the respondents were asked:

Q.9 What are the numbers, split by gender, of the senior leadership team in your organisation? The results were transferred into excel and analysed, the breakdown was then

transferred into percentages. The results are summarised in **Figure 28** and the percentages are outlined in **Table 44** below.

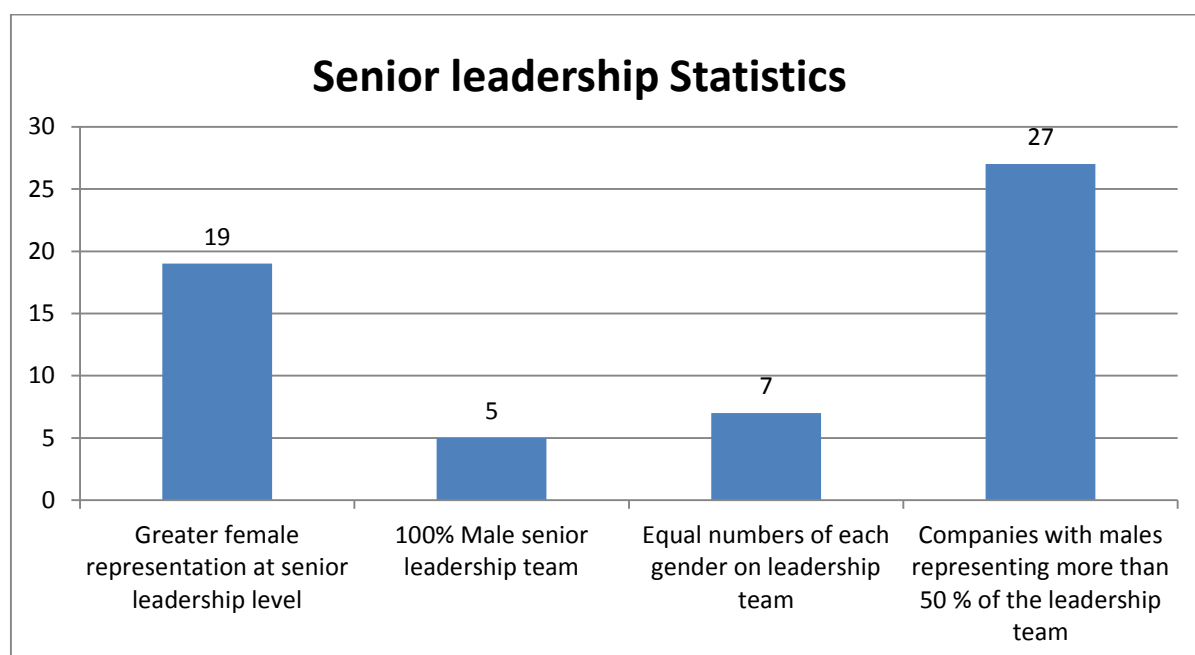


Figure 28: Leadership Split by Gender

Senior Leadership Statistics	Total	% of organisations
Greater female representation at senior leadership level	19	33%
100% Male senior leadership team	5	9%
Equal numbers of each gender on leadership team	7	11%
Companies with males representing more than 50 % of the leadership team	27	47%
Grand Total	58	100%

Table 44: Percentage split

The next section will present the results of an analysis of the perceptions and assumptions that exist in relation to women's career progression, priority and the perceived barriers to women's career advancement.

4.7 Findings in respect of Perceptions and Assumptions

This section will explore what society's views are in relation to the career priority and the perceived barriers to women's career advancement. The following questions were asked in an attempt to better understand how society views traditional relationships and to examine the conventional assumptions they may be present in society today.

Q.17 Did/Do you think that when you have children your career would?

(a) Take priority over your partners; (b) be equally important or (c) take a back seat in comparison?

This study included a total of 58 respondents in middle management level roles, 18 Males and 40 Females. **Table 45** below represents the results to the question. **Figures 29** is a chart which shows the distribution of responses per gender across the entire sample population. **Figure 29** outlines that 22 females out of 40 believed that their career would be equally as important as their partners.

Gender	Be equally important	Take a back seat in comparison	Take priority over your partners	Grand Total
Female	22	17	1	40
Male	9	3	6	18
Total	31	20	7	58

Table 45: Career Priority Response per Gender

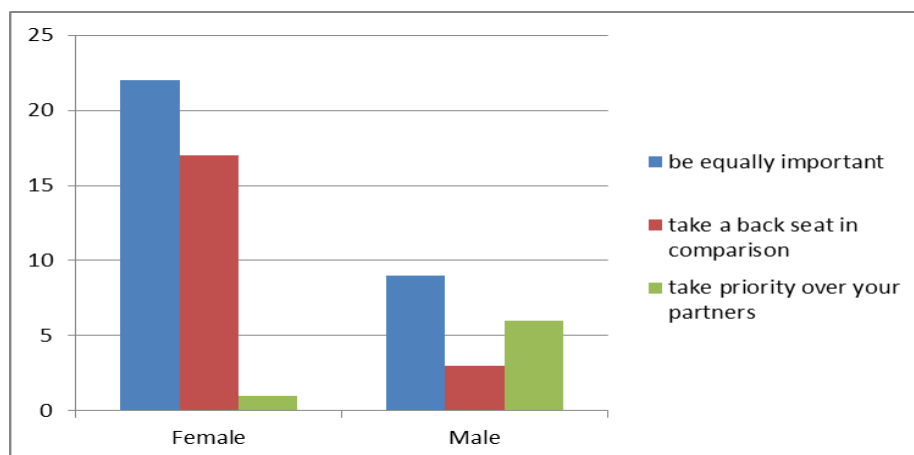


Figure 29: Visual display of Career Priority by Gender

The next section will look at whether both genders have ever made career decisions to accommodate family responsibilities.

This next question was asked in order to see if men and women alike have made decisions to accommodate family commitments, these findings may be interconnected to the question relating to women's No1 barrier to career advancement which is analysed in the next section.

Q.20 Have you ever made any of the below career decisions to accommodate family responsibilities? The possible options available as a response are outlined in the first column

of **Table 46** below. Only 39 respondents took part in answering this question, 28 women and 11 men. **Figure 30** is a chart that represents the distribution of responses by gender.

Career Decision made to acc family	Female	Male	Grand Total
Leaving a job	2	3	5
Limiting travel	16	5	21
Making a lateral move	5	2	7
More flexible role	5	1	6
Grand Total	28	11	39

Table 46: Career Decisions made to accommodate family

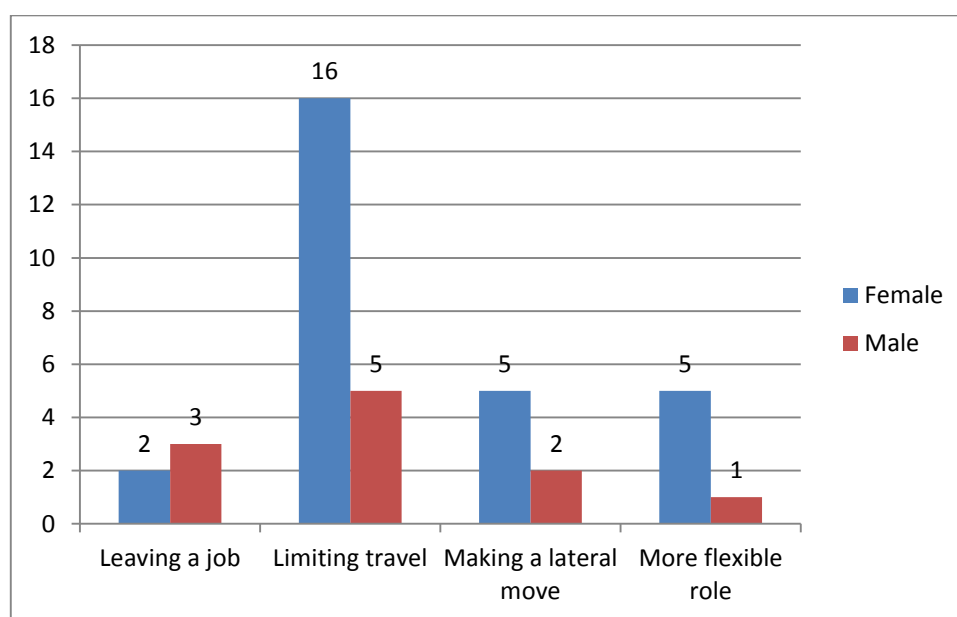


Figure 30: Visual Display of Career Decisions made to accommodate family by Gender

Respondents were also asked the following question:

Q.24 What do you believe is the No1 barrier to women's career advancement?

The possible responses in relation to this question are outlined in **Table 47**, column 1 below.

This study included a total of 53 respondents in middle management level roles, 14 Males and 39 Females. **Table 47** below represents the results to the question. **Figure 31** is a chart of the

distribution of responses per gender across the entire sample population. **Figure 31** outlines that 16 females out of 39 believed that the No1 Barrier to women's career advancement is 'prioritising family over work' and 7 of the 14 men believed this to also be the case.

No1 Barrier to women's career advancement	Female	Male	Grand Total
Active discrimination based solely on gender	4		4
Deep rooted conventional attitudes that a woman should be the primary care giver in the home	9	2	11
Prioritising family over work	16	7	23
The individual themselves, their attitude towards advancement and the limitations they put on themselves	10	5	15
Grand Total	39	14	53

Table 47: Responses to No1 Barrier to Women's Career Advancement

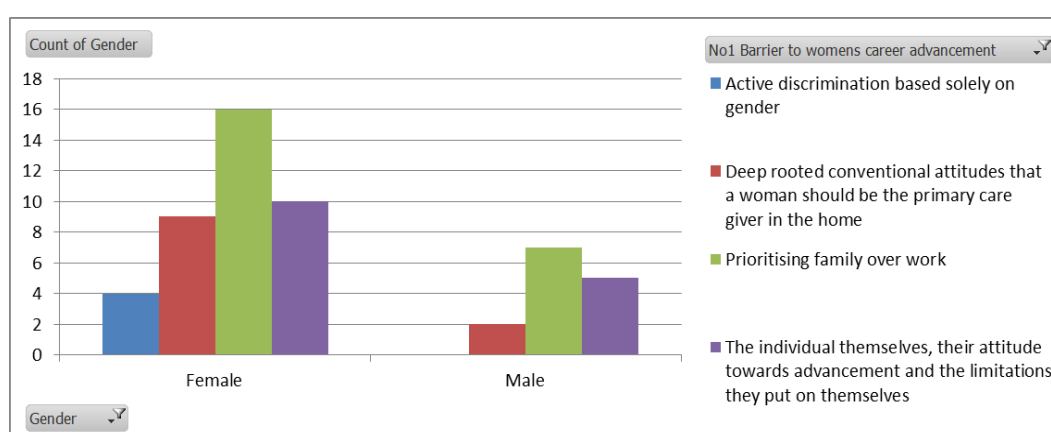


Figure 31: Visual Display of responses by Gender

In an attempt to test the theory of occupational socialization respondents were asked which of alternative role they would most likely do if they were not in their current role:

This is where individuals themselves limit their own career possibilities due to the perceptions they have of a particular occupation being applicable to a certain gender only, also known as gender stereotyping as referenced by Catalyst (2007).

Q. 15 Which of these roles would you most likely do if you were not in your current role:

This study included a total of 58 respondents in middle management level roles across various functions, 19 Males and 39 Females. **Table 48** below represents the results to the question for both genders. **Figure 32** represents a graph which displays the choices by each gender. For example, **Table 48** outlines that 9 women would choose childcare as an alternative profession and 7 would choose hairdressing.

Alternative Role	Female	Male	Grand Total
Childcare	9		9
Doctor	13	8	21
Electrician	1	2	3
Fire-fighter	4	8	12
Hairdresser	7		7
Quantity surveyor	5	1	6
Grand Total	39	19	58

Table 48: Alternative Profession Choices by Gender

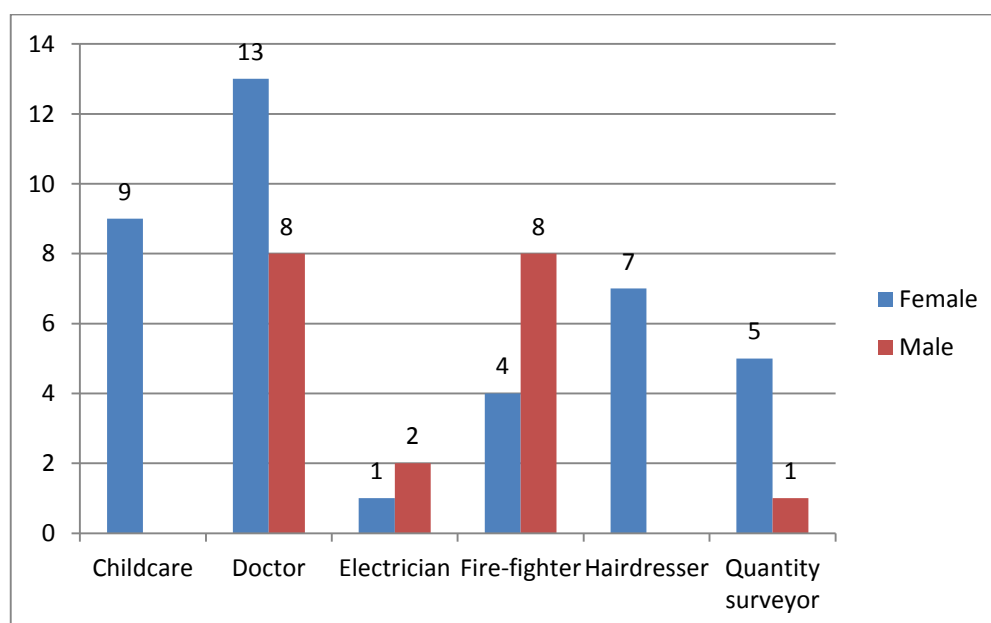


Figure 32: Visual Display of Alternative Profession Choice

Finally a scenario was presented to respondents in order to test for unconscious bias and also direct discrimination in society. The scenario was:

If you were faced with 2 possible candidates, one is a woman in her early 30's, recently married, the other is a man in his 30's. The woman is better suited for the role however the man is also well qualified but is not as confident. The project they will be commencing will run for at least 18 months initially. Do such thoughts enter into your selection process as: Family commitments, Maternity leave then childcare issues etc with regards to the female candidate? The options available as a response are outlined in column 1 of **Table 49** below. For example 11 women and 8 men answered, yes it would be something they would think of but never allow it to affect their judgement. **Figure 33** is a visual representation of the numbers of each gender's responses.

Interview Scenario involving 2 candidates of different genders	Female	Male	Grand Total
No I would purely assess each of the candidates on their individual merits	28	10	38
Yes it would be something I would think of but never allow it to affect my judgement	11	8	19
Yes and I would seriously consider offering the job to her on this fact	1		1
Grand Total	40	18	58

Table 49: Responses to Interview Scenario based on Gender

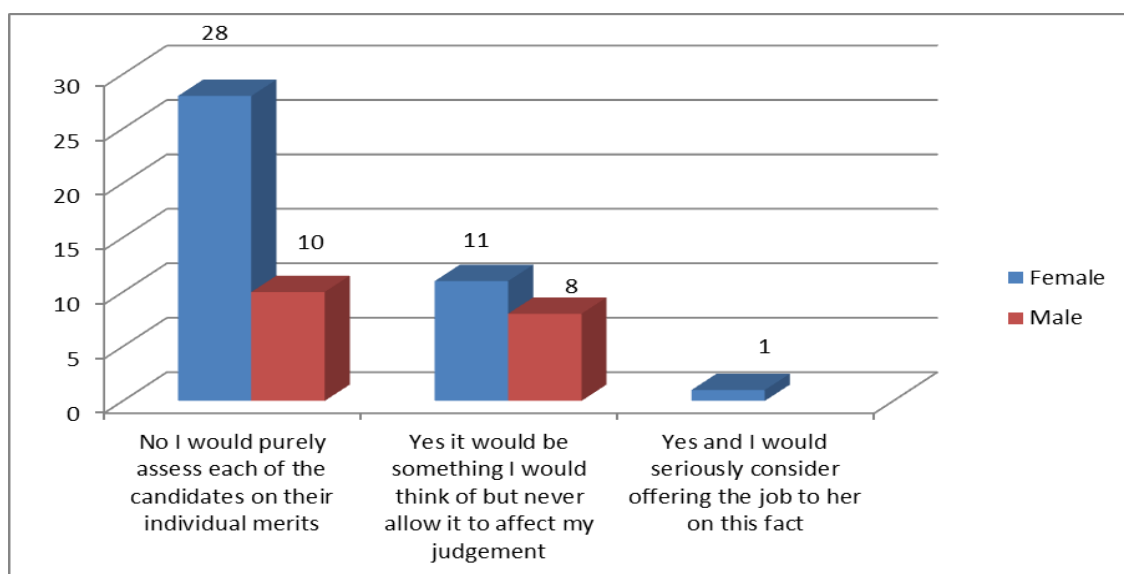


Figure 33: Visual Display of responses by Gender

Chapter 5 - Discussion and Conclusion

Education

According to the research in chapter 2, carried out by The Higher Education Authority women are entering into higher education at double the numbers of men (HEA, 2006 and 2014). From the results presented in chapter 4, 68% (15) of the male respondents have a third level degree or higher and 60% (27) of the women surveyed held a third level degree or higher. The results from this sample population would therefore present as both genders having a similar distribution of education level, these results may include mature student qualifications whereas the HEA data referred to is based on full time applications to higher education which would be predominantly school leavers. There is insufficient evidence to suggest that women tend to be educated to a higher level than men.

Aspirations and ambition

It was found by Ely et al. (2014) that the values and ambition of both genders of HBS alumnae are equal upon commencing their careers however the comparison in how these goals are realized over time are very different when reviewed. The findings presented in chapter 4 were such that no significant difference exists between the genders in relation to aspirations being realised. In further tests the other independent variable's results yielded no significant difference based on marital status or age. The findings showed single and married respondents have achieved most of their aspirations. There cannot be any conclusions drawn, as the literature would suggest, that women's aspirations are not realised to the same degree as men's from the results presented. It can therefore be argued that it is an individual's own drive and determination which determines if their ambitions are achieved rather than their gender.

When career progression was assessed, 100% of male respondents wanted to progress. In comparison 78% of female respondents wanted progression. In relation to the likelihood of progression female responses equated to a 50:50 split however the male responses indicated a greater confidence in the likelihood of promotion with 63% responding as likely or very likely. It may be fair to conclude that overall, men present as more ambitious in relation to career progression. However, there is sufficient evidence to support the Hypothesis that women's aspirations and goals have not been realised to the same degree as men's. This finding contravenes those which were reported by Ely et al. (2014) outlined above.

The next discussion will assess whether any difference was present in employment between men and women in respect of responsibility, job satisfaction and the senior leadership demographics that exist in their organisations.

Employment

There was no significant evidence found to suggest that men tend to have line reports and financial responsibility more so than women. Initial results were 45% of women have line reports in comparison to 55% of men surveyed. 67% of women have financial responsibility in comparison to 70 % of men, when tested there was no significant difference apparent between gender or marital status in this regard. There was also insufficient evidence to suggest that men tend to have greater degrees of job satisfaction as found by Ely et al. (2014). For the purposes of this study there is no statistical difference in the satisfaction levels of either gender. Overall 81% of women and 75% of men are either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ in their current role. Respondents were also asked about their senior leadership teams in an attempt to assess the degree of female representation at this level. From the 58 responses logged 9% reported having 100% male leadership teams and 47% reported having >50% male representation at senior leadership level. Overall 56% of those surveyed are working in organisations with male dominated senior leadership teams, there were 19 respondents (33%) who have greater female representation at senior level and 7 respondents (11%) stated that there is an equal balance at the top. These findings would present as being in line with the statistics reported by Grant Thornton (IBR, 2013) “8% of plc board members in Ireland are women” and the European Commission (2013) in relation to the low number of female representation at board level.

The next discussion will assess the findings in relation to people’s perceptions and assumptions of women in the workforce.

Assumptions and Perceptions

Having found that there is no significant difference in the ambition, realization of aspirations, level of responsibility or job satisfaction in employment between women and men this section

will explore what society's views are based on a number of assumption made in relation to career priority and the perceived barriers to women's career advancement.

55% of females believed that their career would be equally as important as their partners when asked about having children, 50% of men also supported this belief. This indicates that conventional opinions are diverging however 42.5% of women believed that their career would take a back seat in comparison to their partners, 3 men also believed this to be the case for them. This is somewhat encouraging in terms of equality; ultimately this decision should be made based on the practicalities of who has the better job and higher salary. It should not be the case that a woman's career takes a back seat merely because she is a woman and therefore expected to stay at home to raise children. In considering career decisions made to accommodate family, 3 men have left jobs in order to accommodate family responsibility in comparison to only 2 women. Limiting travel is the most common career decision made by both genders in order to accommodate family responsibilities. The results are encouraging noting that it is not only women who are making these decisions, 5 women took a more flexible role in comparison to 1 man.

Ely et al. (2014) found that the overwhelming belief from 77% of HBS graduates as to the No1 barrier to women's career advancement is "prioritising family over work". This confirms that the traditional thinking persists in relation to deep rooted attitudes about women as the primary caregiver in the home and is further supported by the findings of this study. 43% of overall respondents, 50% of men and 41% of women believe this to be the case, despite the fact that men and women have made similar career decisions in order to accommodate family responsibilities. Ely et al. (2014) identified that men and women in top management teams were typically more likely than those lower down in the hierarchy to have made career decisions to accommodate family. This still does not explain the gender gap in senior leadership in Ireland or in the US. It is worth noting that 28% of respondents believed that it is an individual's own attitude towards advancement and the limitations they put on themselves to be the No1 barrier to women's career advancement.

This may explain the phenomenon of 'occupational socialisation' applicants themselves only apply for jobs along the gender lines and may limit themselves to applications that are perceived to be 'female' type roles. Historically certain tasks have been associated with gender, domestic related skills such as catering and cleaning are seen to be more applicable, and dominated by females in the workforce. This is known as "gendering" of skills and jobs

(Adachi, 2013). When respondents were asked about alternative roles they might choose the most popular profession amongst both genders was a Doctor, equal numbers of men would choose to be a fire-fighter. No men selected childcare or hairdressing as an alternative profession. The results for women were more encouraging in terms of ambition and challenging the traditional stereotypes, the non-typical choices for women included, Doctor 33%, fire-fighter 11%, electrician 2% and quantity surveyor was chosen by 13% of women. These results reflect the ambition of women and are possibly linked to the more diverse subjects that women are reportedly excelling in (CIPD, 2015 and Humphreys, 2014). Typically though it may be argued that with 41% of women choosing either childcare or hairdressing and no men selecting these as an alternative profession there is still some way to go in eradicating the deep rooted stereotypes that exist in relation to the gendering of skills by society.

The interview scenario question was purposely designed to get people thinking about unconscious bias. People may think that they are completely unbiased when it comes to equality however when faced with the scenario of 2 candidates of similar skillset however the woman is recently married, the results were interesting. Over 65% of respondents would not discriminate based on gender, 1 respondent would consider not offering the job to the woman based on the circumstances of her current situation i.e. the possibility of having children in the near future. 19 responded to say “Yes it would be something I would think of but never allow it to affect my judgment”, this is recognition that unconscious bias exists in society although maybe not intentional it is still a very real factor in the progress of women’s careers.

Research Implications

As mentioned above there is evidence found in this study to suggest that that deep rooted conventional stereotypes still exist in relation to the roles that women and men play in society. The theory of occupational socialisation and the gendering of skills is apparent and was established through an analysis of the individuals own choices for alternative professions. The

findings may indicate that, in the absence of any finding of direct discrimination based on gender, marital status or age, it is a person's perception of themselves which may limit their level of success and career advancement.

Employers need to be aware of some of these conventional views and opinions that exist and work towards a business strategy that involves diversity training and raising awareness of unconscious bias. This coupled with robust, fair and consistent procedures for career progression will help to combat the divide that is evident from the literature in senior level management in Ireland.

Research Limitations

Despite the indication of making progress on gender equality and the supporting results in this study of a boarder thinking in relation to women's career choices and progression, the study demonstrated the continuing existence of unconscious bias in people's perceptions and assumptions towards women's careers. While the majority of findings within the primary research were at odds with that found by Ely et al. (2014) in a much larger scale survey of 25,000 HBS alumnae somewhat higher levels of generalisations may be found in a subsequent study involving a greater sample size. The study was limited to middle management level roles only however including a variety of different levels in the hierarchy may yield a greater sense of gender equality in employment and give greater insight into the perceptions held by top management professionals. As business sector was not limited to a specific industry type further research may find further supporting evidence that female representation is greater in particular industries such as education and social services whereby 51% of senior roles are held by women (Grant Thornton, IBR 2014).

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

While progress has been made there is still more to be done, awareness is the first step in the change process; therefore, wider promotion of gender equality initiatives and supporting guidance on how to build female talent pipelines is needed. This scarcity of top-level women

implies that there are not enough role models for female leadership. If women are unable to break through the glass ceiling and provide positive role models for the next generation of female leaders and enter into the Chief Executive world, the chain will never be broken.

Drivers of change need to address the conventional views and stereotypes that persist in relation to women's career advancement highlighted by Ely et al. (2014), Kanter and Roessner (2003) and the findings of this study. It is encouraging to note that this study indicated that women have similar expectations to men and there is no evidence to suggest that women's aspirations are not realised to the same degree as men's. The perceived obstacles to women's career advancement were found to be 'prioritising family over career' which is in line with that found by Ely et al. (2014) which confirms that the traditional thinking persists in relation to deep rooted attitudes about women. However there was support for the theory that it is an individual's own attitude towards advancement and the limitations they put on themselves to be the No1 barrier to women's career advancement.

It has been proven that gender balanced leadership is good for business - positive initial impact on stock price, suggesting that a female leader is seen as positive news by investors (Cooke & Glass, 2011). Reinert et al. (2015) also found a positive association between female management representation and firm performance. This business case coupled with the higher numbers of women in tertiary education should be evidence enough for organisations to develop a solution to diversifying the gender mix at the top.

If mandatory quotas are enforced it may be viewed as yet another stigmatization for women to contend with. Arguments about quotas and targets need to be very clear; all jobs must be determined by merit however the main issue is getting women into the recruitment and promotion processes and making these processes fair and transparent (IBEC, 2015).

There was little evidence to suggest direct discrimination based on gender alone, the campaigns that are currently underway in promoting the drive for gender equality are encouraging. More men need to be involved and engaged in the purpose to have maximum impact and see greater change.

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Appendix – Survey Questionnaire

Personal Information

Gender: Male Female

Education:	Leaving cert	Certificate level	Degree	Masters
Family Status:	Single	Married	Divorced	
Age Group:	<34	35 – 50	51+	

Employment

Employment Sector:

Your role title:

What level is your role in your organisation:

Number of employees at the organisation:

What are the numbers, split by gender, of the senior leadership team:

Do you have line reports: (y/n)

Do you have financial responsibilities in your role, profit and loss accountabilities: y/n

Do you want to progress from the role you are currently in: y/n

How likely do you think a promotion will be:

Very Likely Unlikely Very Unlikely

How satisfied are you in your current role:

Very Satisfied Unsatisfied Very Unsatisfied

Which of these roles would you like to do if you were not in your current role:

Fire-fighter Childcare Electrician Hair dresser Quantity surveyor Doctor

Values and Aspirations

Based on the aspirations and ambition you had for your career upon leaving school, have they been realised or achieved in your current life to date.

Entirely Mostly Some Not at all

Did/Do you think that when you have children your career would:

Take priority over your partners Be equally important Take a back seat

Have you ever taken time off/gone part time/career breaks/parental leave to care for your children.

Yes No

Any other breaks in your career at any point?

Yes No

Have you ever made any of the below career decisions to accommodate family responsibilities:

Limiting travel More flexible role Leaving a job Making a lateral move
Declining a promotion

How important would you have ranked career success upon leaving school/college:

Extremely Very Important Not at all

How important is it for you to have a successful career now:

Extremely Very Important Not at all

Please rate the following statements in terms of personal importance

- Importance of quality personal and family relationships:
Extremely Very Somewhat Not at all
- Meaningful and satisfying work, being able to give back:
Extremely Very Somewhat Not at all
- Achieving professional accomplishments:
Extremely Very Somewhat Not at all
- Opportunities for career growth:
Extremely Very Somewhat Not at all
- Compatibility of work and personal life:
Extremely Very Somewhat Not at all

In your view

What do you believe is the No1 barrier to women's career advancement?

(Please select one)

- Prioritising family over work
- Deep rooted conventional attitudes that a women should be the primary care giver in the home
- Active discrimination based solely on gender
- The individual themselves, their attitude towards advancement and the limitations they put on themselves
- Other.....

Do you think that women have to perform better than men to get ahead?

Why is this?

In general, from your experience most men have received their present position because of their gender?

Do you believe that you are paid equally in comparison to a man/woman doing the same role as you?

Why is this?

Scenario

You are faced with 2 possible candidates. One is a woman in her early 30's, recently married she tells you, and a Man in his mid 30's.

The woman is better suited for the role in terms of skillset and experience however the man is also well qualified but isn't as confident. The project they will be commencing will run for at least 18 mths initially. Does such thoughts as:

She will be possibly have a baby soon, Maternity leave then childcare issues enter into your thought process in selecting the most suitable candidate?

- Yes it would be something I would think of but never allow it to affect my judgement
- Yes and I would seriously consider offering the job to her on this fact
- No I would purely assess each of the candidates on their individual merits

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, I appreciate the feedback.