

The barriers and inequalities to women
progressing to management in the retail
sector

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Abstract

Purpose – To explore if there are barriers and inequalities for women progressing into retail management. The main goals of the research are those studying the progression of women in management, to examine if family life, childcare and the glass ceiling are reasons why women do not progress as fast as men in management.

Design/methodology/approach - A qualitative mono-research approach with semi structured interviews with five retail managers is applied to the explorative study in order to gain a profound understanding of these topics.

Findings – The internal and external settings of women in management and the organisational cultures were found as having the most impact on women progressing to management. However, flexibility of organisations, employees' support and development, and family life are significant themes connected to management change over time and along career developments.

Originality/value – This research adds knowledge and understanding to a number of areas (family life, childcare, glass ceiling, networking) so far not considered together. The research updates the literature and identifies challenges and barriers in women's way when progressing in their careers.

Key words - management, family, barriers, career development, change,

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1:1 background:

Broadbridge and Simpson (2011) declare that despite the widespread research carried out in the last decades in the area of leadership, challenges in the advancement of women to more senior positions, are still present and need to be further examined. A woman being underrepresented in senior academic positions continues to still be an issue today (McGuinness, 2015). Gender equality has helped women progress but they are more inclined to take the role of junior and middle management positions (Broadbridge, 2010). Broadly speaking, statistics also show that women still participate less in the labour force as there are almost 30% less woman than men in employment globally, the women's labour force has decreased from 52.4% to 49.6% between 1995 and 2015 (Catalyst, 2016). The presence and status of women in paid employment has improved dramatically over the last half century, however, the progression of professional women into positions of leadership has been slow (Piterman, 2008).

The topic of discussion is the "Barriers and inequalities to women progressing to management in the retail sector". Socially women and men are both equals in the place of work and they are treated the same, in actuality equality between genders is a fundamental principal of EU laws and regulations (Representation in Ireland, 2009), still though, women who are in powerful positions often find they face a daily bombardment of sexist behaviour from men, which in many countries is outlawed in the workplace and often, even amongst the best, women do not do as well as men (Van Der Gaag, 2014). There is the glass ceiling in some organisations, where women are a minority when it comes to senior level positions (Snowdon, 2011), men dominate senior retail management positions due to stereotypes as they are clichéd to be ruthless and goal orientated while women are more nurturing and build relationships (Taylor, 2015). Women are capable of carrying out the same leadership roles as men, they are just not given the same opportunity in some cases and this represents the glass ceiling. Researchers have found that women are a "poorer fit" for management positions due to their "family-work conflict" or maybe women do not become leaders because they find it demanding trying to balance both work

life and family (Buckalew et al., 2012). Women are now staying longer in education and going out to work full time or part time, rather than stay at home, they are now taking bigger roles when it comes to work and holding off to become mothers so that their financially stable and develop their skills (Gregory, 2014). Nowadays woman who have families usually choose to work part time and for some it is not an option; they did not want to opt out of their careers but felt the need to because of other circumstances, such as the structure of work, not having a supportive partner or husband or the masculine culture of the organisation (Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010).

In the retail management industry a lot of men are senior managers, as management is believed to be a male dominated environment, with men having transactional styled leadership skills, while women who are managers are usually in middle management or junior positions (Broadbridge 2010). The question is it to find out why women are not in senior level positions and are there challenges for them moving up in management or do they choose not to be in a senior level position. There can be many reasons why women face barriers when progressing to management. We need to assess why women are not moving as fast into senior roles unlike men - they are equal to men in qualifications and intelligence and studies reveal that women do academically better than men (Lee, 2015). These are not necessarily reasons why women may not move and advance into management positions.

Journal articles and books go on to say that women do not always opt out of their careers to baby bond but rather the price of child care is too expensive (Ferguson, 2015). Women are usually the ones who quit their job, keeping men in business leadership positions; this creates the “cultural norm” (Cauterucci, 2015). With women taking time off it means more men are therefore working. There are also statistics to show men are working longer hours than women (Davidson, 2013). Back in 2014 men took up 65.7% of the employment rate while women only accounted for 55.9% of employment. (Central Statistics Office, 2013). There are still differences in more men working than women, “Unless a mother earns considerably more than her male partner, it is likely to be the woman who stops working or goes part-time,” says Cary Cooper, a professor of organisational psychology and health at the Manchester Business School (Ferguson, 2015).

When it comes to gender stereotypes men are believed to be better leaders than women; men are more autocratic leaders while women prefer the democratic approach- this could have an effect on their ability to be a manager and which is a more suitable approach (Kiser, 2015). The social role proposes that people view others in a particular way; this view and stereotyping can have a very negative effect on advancement in occupational careers and the qualities that each gender is perceived to possess. Furthermore, the social role theory places men and women into different occupational and family roles based on gender prospects and norms play a part in why women in masculine-type jobs such as management face stricter performance evaluations and are less likely to advance further in their career (Kiser, 2015).

This topic is worthy of study because research has been carried out on, barriers and inequalities to women progressing to management in the retail sector across the world but retail management has not been explored in great detail in an Irish context unlike other top management positions such as banking, entrepreneurs and CEO's of multinational businesses. Interviews and previous studies have looked at the obstacles in women's way of progressing into management in the big financial and multinational companies but the literature gap hasn't been closed on retail management. The focus and methodology will focus on Ireland's biggest and well known retail firms that have been around for many years and are very popular among the Irish job sector. The significance of this study is to examine why women are not progressing to senior level positions if we live in a world that is deemed equal to both men and women.

The aim of this research proposal is to test from academic research and studies that women face barriers while trying to progress into higher level positions in the retail industry. A qualitative approach will be used as this is the best option of getting a greater insight as to why women may not advance as well as men in senior roles or whether there barriers in their way of progressing to retail management. Interviews will give first-hand information of why men and women believe that women are not progressing into senior roles and also with the help of journal articles giving us a better idea as to how society views women in management. Interviews are an approach which will be used to analyse people's opinions and develop an understanding if the glass ceiling does still exist in the retail management industry and this research study question whether women are still not progressing into

senior roles in the 21st century. This qualitative study will not be biased as the interviews will take both men's and women's perceptions of progressing to management.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2:1 Introduction:

As mentioned earlier women are now working in part time retail positions and becoming successful working women as well as being a mother and having a family (McKenna, 2015). These women may have worked full time and were deeply dedicated to career development prior to having a family (Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010)

The main problem for women is experiencing specific challenges when trying to achieve a leadership role in retail management (Outland, 2010). There can often be obstacles in women's way hindering their advancement in retail due to barriers of gender (Nordell, 2014). Women struggle with so-called second generation gender biases, which are "powerful yet often invisible barriers to women's advancement that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interactions that inadvertently favour men" (Patel and Buiting, 2013). There are a number of key themed areas that will be discussed which are generally the reason for women not progressing in retail management.

The purpose of this literature is to discover if women really are treated differently to men when it comes to promotions for senior level roles.

This chapter will be divided into numerous sub headings describing the barriers to management for women in the retail sector. These sections picked are common reasons why women may not receive promotions or maybe why they do not opt for senior positions. A deepened study into women in management may help answer our research question "do women face barriers and inequalities when progressing to management".

The study begins with one of the main factors women face and is deemed critical when evaluating if there are barriers to progression in management such as family life, childcare glass ceiling, networking, traits and characteristics and behaviours and the promotional ladder in staff/line positions.

2:2 Family life a barrier when progressing to management

Mothers are often seen as less devoted to work than non-mothers, fathers, meanwhile, are not only viewed as equally capable as men without children, but also suggestively more dedicated to work (E.W Washington DC, 2015). Researchers describe this spectacle as a “motherhood penalty” and “fatherhood bonus” and this is without bearing in mind some of the difficulties of parental leave and child care, which irrationally affect female workers. (E.W Washington DC, 2015). Women who experienced interruptions in their career said it affected them negatively when going back to the work force (Parker, 2015). If women are seeking senior management positions in retail then the work can become far more strenuous, women will need to work long hours and spend less time at home with their family; this has resulted in many women being childless because of the limitations this has on their careers e.g. the difficulty in conforming to the long working hours and managing domestic household tasks (Broadbridge, 2010). Women often "lowered" themselves to junior ranking, lesser paid jobs so that they had the option of working part-time, the vast majority of managers asked believed senior level positions needed to be full-time and could not be constructed on a part-time basis (Seda, 2000), this is not because senior jobs cannot be implemented more compliantly, as senior managers stated that at least some traits of their jobs could be undertaken more flexibly than they currently are (Broadbridge, 2010). Much of retailing now operates 24/7 and so it is practical that more flexible arrangements are explored at management levels; long hours appeal to the male values and this is why senior management opportunities are open to males rather than females (Broadbridge, 2010). In 2011 only 55% of women worked outside the family home, this was relatively low compared to other countries such as the UK and France (Irish Examiner, 2011). Women in part time positions are at a disadvantage as retail managers and senior level employers are looking for women to work as a full time manager and some women feel exhausted by the battles they face in the workplace (Broadbridge 2010) - especially when they choose to work passively to manage work/life balance. For those trying to progress there is often a lack of senior management support for promotion or development (Cherry, 2010). This affects the part time women workers who work in retail as their ambitions and ideas are over looked as they are subordinates of the managers (Foster, 2006). (Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014) suggest that women surface barriers in

retail management after they have had children and also other sectors of the workforce as women may find it difficult to know how they will feel when they become a mother. "Some women who expect to love it are bored and angry and want to work," "Others are utterly taken by surprise by how much they want to stay home." (Cherry, 2010). The above literature using women with families is quite biased and just gives one view. We cannot assume that all retail companies are not flexible to women or that they don't let them job share; with more in-depth information we could see whether flexibility for women in senior positions is possible, it is unlikely though as women who have children tend to take a lot more breaks from work than men and this could account for why they may not receive senior management roles, women may want to limit their travel when they have children or look for a new flexible job (Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014). Typically though both men and women in senior level positions are more likely to accommodate family responsibilities, more so than people in lower managerial positions (Ely, Stone, and Ammerman, 2014). This argument of women not receiving managerial positions leads into the next discussion of childcare.

2:3 Childcare affecting women progressing in management

Being flexible signifies the vital component for employed mothers, who have the substitutions of part-time and provisional work, or job sharing, individuals without families cannot share to the matters connected to child minding. It is very challenging to find an impeccable childcare organisation, it does not occur. Adopt the scenario that you will have to come to terms with the fact that you are going to have to live with this nightmare of co-operation and responsibility.

(Blunt 1999, p 26) has delivered a list with numerous of examples which children necessitate responsiveness and attention to

- The nutritional and attire necessities of children differ with their age
- Children easily become sick
- Youngsters have to be prepared for play sittings and school
- The school timetable of children is commonly dissimilar
- Children are required to do homework
- Children need to be well looked after

- Children need a packed and nutritious lunch for school
- Parents have to attend their children's school occasions

The degree of work involvement for women has developed significantly, most married women do work for economic causes, but it could also be maintained that there are many women who work, not for financial reasons, but for societal reasons, for they're tired in their homes and they want to meet people and progress in their careers (Damaske, 1991).

Regardless of the fact that the salary of working mothers is essential for several families, social employment services are inadequate As stated by (Nicolson 1997, p 388) there is a growing feeling of guilt among working mothers brought about by 'the complex and inconsistent feelings triggered by maternal ambivalence', If they want to have both a career and a family, women have to miss out on their 'maternal instincts', whether real or instilled by social preconceptions (Milcolson 1997 pg 393) witnessed that working mothers are often faced with health problems due to their family and work responsibilities.

Families with more than one child may find the costs difficult to bear and situations may occur when one or both parents have to take a leave of absence from work, such as when the child or the caretaker is sick (Ferguson, 2015).

Businesses may choose to offer employees childcare services in the workplace, which would demonstrate a great help to parents that cannot afford private childcare. Suitable childcare services are necessary to enable working mothers to have a competent work performance and to advance in their careers (Hochschild 1997, pp 205-206) has offered a number of choices with regard to childcare, among them being

- Meeting services offer 3 hour programmes for pre-school children
- Full day-care between the hours of 9 a m to 5 pm
- Childminder takes care of children at their home until the parents come back from work
- Nanny au-pair resides in the family home, prices are different, according to organisation and vacancies
- Babysitter takes care of children, mostly during the evenings

Entrance to these services may be partial or preoccupied in certain areas, such as highly industrialised cities.

2:4 Glass ceiling in organisations

Although the status of women in the workplace has improved slightly in recent years, advancement has still been sadly slow in some key areas (Catalyst, 2012). Management is an obvious case in point (Taylor, 2015) Women are still hostile to make an impact on the upper ranks of Irish business in contrast though, reports found that Irish companies are offering a more supportive atmosphere for working mothers, with 71 per cent of companies now offering flexible working arrangements, up from 53 per cent in 2013 (Horgan-Jones, 2014). Awareness of the importance of gender diversity on company panels has improved over the past few years but some women agree that they don't have the same access to men when it comes to available senior roles (Taylor, 2015). However, some women do need to be more proactive and put themselves forward for senior management positions (Taylor, 2015). But the glass ceiling is a barrier so indirect that it is translucent, yet so strong that it averts women from moving up the corporate ladder", from their point on the corporate ladder, women can see the high-level corporate positions but are kept from "reaching the top" (Feminist majority foundation, 2014).

Fascinatingly there is fierce agreement that there is not a glass ceiling despite all of the above, it is women that put the constraints on themselves rather than having the courage and conviction to be more assertive about their own progression. (Malti and Nightingale, 2014). However, it seems many still believe the playing field is unequal; the survey found women can therefore be less likely to put themselves forward for board positions (Institute of Directors in Ireland, 2015), more than half of the participants said women do not have the same access to evidence as men when it comes to available board positions. The reasons cited for that were interlocking directorships, better contacts and stronger networks available to men (RTÉ Commercial Enterprises Ltd, 2015). Women who manage families and household budgets make excellent managers at the workplace, as they are often experts in time and financial management, multitasking and priority setting (Wharton, 2012). On the other hand, a common mind-set of both men and women to be overcome is that managerial jobs are jobs for men, this is due to men being perceived as

the primary breadwinner (which is less and less the case in today's labour market) and having the innate attributes required to lead and manage (International labour organisation, 2015). Women may face the occurrence of men being promoted faster even in women typed jobs such as servicing, when you look at the top its usually men in these senior retail management positions, although the difference now is women can break the barriers to the glass ceiling such as helping women who may have opted out of that senior level position or finding a good mentor or sponsor to put you on the right track to help you build the right network of contacts to develop (Runnheim Olson, 2012).

2:5 Networking

Mentoring for women in retail can cause barriers to them progressing in the organisation, as mentoring is used in most organisations and will help either of the opposite sex reach retail management roles (Elmuti, Jia, and Davis, 2009). Some organisations tend to lessen women's experience of mentoring or developing network opportunities, causing women to be less favoured against and miss out on retail opportunities; such as travelling abroad or a new promotion (Firth, 2016). Women face barriers when it comes to senior retail promotions including a lack of social support and mentors in an organisation (Paludi, 2013). In order to be a successful retail manager, it is important to make connections or networks with influential members. This can be difficult for women because sometimes they are left out intentionally or unintentionally- when it comes to formal or informal meetings because of the cultural practises of the organisation, women are not considered valuable retail managers unlike men or they are not given enough authority in the retail department of management, therefore women are less likely to be involved in the social networking of the business (Paludi, 2013). Women often find it difficult to break into the male management environment and this leads them to not receiving as many contacts, opportunities and information on policies (Torrington, Hall, and Taylor, 2005). Networks for women usually narrow rather than widen development opportunities for them; this is because women usually form networks with people they already know inside the business making it difficult for themselves to make new acquaintances with other retail departments (Harriman, 1996). Women sometimes feel their traditionally feminine traits are an advantage, mainly in forming relationships with clients and colleagues (McCullum, 2014). Examples of these women leaders cited include: Building relationships, women are

generally calm and don't possess a huge amount of ego upfront, which is helpful for building relationships with Main Street CEOs. Investing in others, women are better at compromise building and care more about people and how they are feeling about their roles. Reading people, Women tend to be more empathetic and better listeners than their male counterparts, which makes them better at reading people (Coffman, Steeves, and Miller, 1996). Women who want to progress to the highest levels need to be aware of the value of social capital and know how to use this to their advantage and it is interesting to examine the perspectives of women who have broken through the 'glass ceiling and have built the right networks (Arnstein, 2016). Professional relationships create opportunities and outlets for sounding off about career challenges; say senior executive women, who attribute most of their advancement to having connections, "Women don't ask for help," says Ms. Sadik-Khan. "Women see it as a sign of weakness." (Rappaport, 2015). Women could network better with other females through social interventions and general casual meetings, this links into the next section of where women fit in staff and line positions and their options of climbing the promotional ladder and using their feminine traits and characteristics.

2:6 Traits, characteristics and behaviours

Although it cannot be proven that women lead differently to men, there is the social issue that both men and women differ in their management and leadership traits and these gender roles are relevant to help understand the characteristics of management, these could create a barrier to female progression in retail management (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). There are two attributes, agentic characteristics, which are recognised more strongly in men than women; they describe primarily a firm, controlling, and confident tendency for example, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive. In employment settings, agentic behaviours might include speaking boldly, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity focused to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions. This type of behaviour is needed in the retail business as it is a very task orientated environment and employees need to have the right traits (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Communal characteristics, which are credited more strongly to women than men, describe primarily a concern with the welfare of other people for example, affectionate, helpful,

kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle. In employment settings, communal behaviours might include speaking cautiously, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others' direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Women are deemed caring and deal with people and relationships, they have developed these skills from being at home and then they carry these skills into the place of work; women seem less boss centred than men and this is why it is perceived that women are more collaborative and rationale while men are more bureaucratic and directive (Oshagbemi and Gill, 2003). However, women's traits are also needed for the retail environment as you need to have a manager to deal with people effectively, although studies show men and women are different in characteristics, they cannot prove that one gender leads better than the other, so why is this an obstacle for women progressing to retail management, society still views men as the better leaders for retail management. There are a number of reasons for this- stereotypes believe men are more effective at leading than women and men are classified as receiving better financial results for the organisation making subordinates want a male manager; this in turn creates prejudice towards women leaders making them less desirable and they have lesser chances of gaining a senior management position in retail since organisations want to increase sales rather than decrease their retail sales by having a female manager (Powell, 2012). Even though it is not confirmed, women may not progress in retail management because it is a hands on, task orientated job, which is better suited to men rather than women for the retail industry (Kokemuller, 2016). With retail management positions considered male and benefiting men looking to progress to new opportunities or receive promotion, then these stereotypes can help influence progression in the environment (Catalyst, 2016).

2:7 Promotional ladders for women in staff positions and line positions

If there is little integration between men and women then segregation can become a big problem, slowing down women's mobility to retail management and causing barriers to progression. The more segregated both genders become over time this can become an advantage for men as they will be receiving promotion in a male dominated environment (Malhotra, 2013). Women may be on shorter ladders where they have gone from a sales assistant job to working as a junior retail manager. Promotional ladders are much longer

for men and always have been. Women are seen as a minority in some organisations, such as women working in retail with clothing, baking and cleaning and there are sometimes no directly connected ladders to senior retail management positions (Padavic and Reskin, 2002). If fewer women are in top retail management roles then there is nobody there to represent the junior women employees causing problems for women subordinates to reach promotion, more coaching and support should be available to junior retail managers to create networks with senior women managers (Leimon, Moscovici, and Goodier, 2011) and this links into our networking sub section, where women should connect on social involvements.

Many women are in lower managerial retail jobs and are underrepresented in senior retail positions and this is not down to a lack of education or qualifications, as mentioned above earlier in our introduction. Women are less likely to receive a promotion to a higher retail position and men move a lot quicker to line positions than women and those women who do move to line positions are usually taking the place of a previous female position (Bell, 2011). One of the reasons women experience trouble climbing the corporate retail ladder is that they are allocated excessively into "staff" rather than "line" positions. While staff positions are important and can be stimulating, they are not a breeding ground for top retail executives. The first requirement for women's advancement is successful performance in entry level "line" positions that are natural springboards to top management; even with women succeeding in their positions they are not offered promotions for retail (Comer and Drollinger, 1997). Women may not be reaching line positions due to the family bias conflict as managers assume that family life interferes with work performance, just being a woman indicates family responsibilities, and puts women at odds with current perceptions of "the ideal worker." Research has found that both male and female managers incorporated family work biases toward female employees, and that these biases significantly inhibited women's career progress, a new clarification for the persistence of the glass ceiling (Hoobler, Lemmon, and Wayne, 2011). With women in lesser retail positions it means women cannot be senior retail level mentors or role models; it is reported that men are more likely to serve as mentors than women. This outcome, combined with the lower number of women in key positions who could take on the role of mentor, means that female apprentices are less likely to

participate in same-gender mentoring than their male colleagues, as a consequence, many aspiring young women must establish successful mentoring relationships with male mentors (Leck and Orser, 2013). In contrast many women may not want to be mentors or climb the ladder for their own personal reasons. There are many women in senior roles although clearly not as high as men so we cannot say that there are barriers to promotional ladders.

2:8 Conclusion

The research examines the obstacles in women's way of becoming a senior level retail manager (PewResearchCenter, 2015). The articles only focus on one side of the story, they don't ask how men feel about promotion nor do they feel women are being differentiated against and that females should be given the opportunity to show that they can carry out a retail management role; rather they ask how women feel about the situation of discrimination (O'Connor, 2015). Women in the workplace is a very important issue- in retail management roles they may not be treated as fairly, but researchers cannot be biased and say all firms carry out this behaviour; researchers needs to ask opinions and views from both sides, but this rarely happens (Yurkiewicz, 2012). Pay is not just a factor that affects women who are in junior manager retail positions and being paid less than senior managers, or their male colleagues receiving better promotions, but rather opportunity and advancement across the work force (Harlan and Berheide 1994). Some retail managers and companies believe women are more than capable of handling a retail manager position in the managing sector and more companies could have women in senior retail roles if they wanted (Purcell and Knight, 2015). Firms cannot just assume that all women are family orientated. Some women may not be able to have kids or maybe they want both, a successful job as a retail manager and a family (Spilman, 2015). Stereotyped research also suggests that the majority of men want a manager's position; nobody has taken into consideration that some men may want to stay at home with their families and let their wives be the main provider (Torres, 2014). The research has proved to be very biased to women who want to progress further in their career and also relatively biased to men. Although some of the literature above goes on to show that women may be the reason they are not receiving management positions, as they do not put themselves out there or they are not confident enough. We cannot undertake that all women want senior management

positions, some women may prefer to be categorised in the bottom to mid management hierarchy, which means less responsibility for them, they could have more flexi time resulting in them getting to spend more time with family and friends. The point isn't to blame men for women having barriers in their way of management, there has been way too much man-shaming as it is, the aim of this research is instead to interpret women's views and understand the real reasons why they did not take up a senior retail management position (Lipman, 2014). Some women may genuinely care about power, some may not, and some may see too many negatives in working in senior management positions. For the last category, talking may lead to identifying opportunities that remove some of those negatives or obstacles that are in women's way of grabbing an opportunity for promotion (Greenfield, 2015)

To go further on this study, qualitative research needs to be carried out to question women on their opinions of work and how they feel about senior level positions. We will investigate if there are problems in their way of receiving a promotion in work and we will also consider are all retail managers treating women equally or if there is a glass ceiling in the working environment. From the literature review, it is clear that there is a work problem in some companies for women and it needs to be resolved for the future. There is a need to explore the barriers to progression for females in retail management as it has not yet been discussed in greater detail, research methodology will help give a greater understanding and close the gap as to why barriers still exist for women even in the 21st century. At the moment from our literature we cannot yet conclude that all women face barriers to progression in retail management, with the help of interviews this may close the gap on barriers to progression for women in retail management.

Chapter 3: Research Question

3:1 Research Question:

The research title for my thesis proposal is, ‘The barriers and inequalities to women progressing to management in the retail sector’.

It is commonly known that management is a male dominated environment; however women are trying to enter management positions and embracing men’s style of managing and leading (Patel, 2013). Both, males and females have different opinions of leadership when it comes to management (Literature above); therefore, what are the main reasons that more men are holding retail management positions and women are still scarce in management in retail industries?

Although the research is based on theory about women in management, barriers to career progression and inequalities towards females is the reason why a qualitative research method is the best option and constructing an examination of the research issues by using relevant information from articles, journals, books, and information from the internet. To analyse research data, it creates answers and opens new findings for myself the researcher. . It is common knowledge that some females want to reach top management in retail industries and they may face some barriers and obstacles in their way when accomplishing senior positions and promotions in the retail sector (Schwanke, 2013). Also, it is obvious that men have leader positions in many domains (Boundless, 2016). However, my research is mostly about family life and the glass ceiling as these are considered the main stereotypical barriers for women not progressing to retail management. The study seeks to gain a deeper insight into the barriers of female progression at retail management.

As mentioned above in the introduction, women possess the same qualifications and education as men but the pace of them receiving management positions is very slow (Timothy, 2015).

3:2 The aim of this research is to:

- Explore why there are barriers for women in retail management as it is believed that this area has not been investigated so much in Ireland, but rather more senior level positions have been studied such as the banking sectors.
- Another aim is to help other researchers gather data on why women do not progress in retail management, even though it has always been considered a woman's industry, as mentioned from the literature above.
- Very little studies have been carried out in Ireland asking men why they believe women have not reached management positions, given the fact that lots of women are well educated in Ireland today, the aim is to talk to men and women on the reasons they believe women are not reaching management positions or why they are not climbing the corporate ladder. The majority of previous academic studies and literature has focused on the disadvantages for women not progressing to management and the glass ceiling which cannot be physically noticed in organisations.
- The goal is to gain an insight perspective on how men feel and what they believe are the barriers to women colleagues not receiving promotions, this will then give women an idea of how men feel about barriers to progression in the retail environment
- 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 retail world.
- What are the differences in perceptions among males regarding these barriers of retail progression?
- When this research is complete, there is hope that there is an answer if women do face barriers when progressing to management or is all just a myth, the purpose is to review real life situations of women in retail for these answers and maybe then we can close the gap on barriers to women progression in retail management.

3:3 The objective of this study is to:

- One of the number one barriers to female progression in retail management is family over work, aim is to discuss with members of retail environments, is this an issue advancing their career as a manager or do women still stay in junior management positions for retail, we will be able to find this information when conducting interviews and get a realistic number of how many women are in retail management who have children and work.
- Another issue is the glass ceiling in organisations, from interviews we will get women's and men's views if there is more support offered to women now in reaching senior roles in management, or are there any invisible barrier in their way of progressing to senior management position.
- Seeks to ask what are the barriers in women's way of progressing to retail management, further journals, online resources and interviews should give a better response
- Aim is to see do women find they have to go out and socially interact to build networks and business relationships with other senior retail managers or do they have mentors or good networks provided to them in their place of work.
- Interviews will hopefully answer our main question or give us a deepened insight of do women not opt for senior positions because they would prefer not to or is there a reason why they don't put themselves forward for a senior retail management position or if they had difficulty getting to their management position.
- Goal is to get a balanced view on the perceptions of barriers to female progression and see do both men and women believe there are still barriers and inequalities in retail management positions which slow women management progression.

Even with the vigorous number of updated studies in the field of management, gender and barriers to female progression, there still remains a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between women and progressing to retail management in an Irish context.

The approach of this study is to test women progressing to retail management, so a Qualitative approach is the best solution as you can dig deeper and ask interview questions

in person, another way to back up the research is from books, journal articles and internet sources and then compare and contrast this literature to real life situations.

Chapter 4: Methodology Research

4:1 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the 'barriers and inequalities to women progressing to management in the retail sector'. To investigate the barriers as to why women progress more slowly than men in retail management we will need to study and assess if changes need to occur in retail management.

4:2 Reasons for this research

Even with the vigorous number of updated studies in the field of women in management, there still remains a gap in the literature regarding the connection between women and the reasons why so many of them are not in senior retail roles.

In the literature gaps related to family life, the glass ceiling, networking and childcare are evident and they have been highlighted by numerous researchers who have spoken on the need of carrying out further research in this field, which is clearly evident in our literature review.

This study will focus on one method, which will be a qualitative approach in order to collect data from an academic perspective this is the best choice, having researched other studies (Sharan B, 1998), qualitative seems to be the better option when studying women. Susan Vinnicombe, is a well-known women for her role- focusing on women leaders and why they do not make it to the boardroom or management, she has used numerous qualitative approaches to study women, such as interviews, journals and books but the reason for using qualitative data is, given its strengths, qualitative research is vital for uncovering deeper developments in individuals, teams, and organisations, and understanding how those processes unfold over time(Simmons, 2016) . Additionally, qualitative research is critical for gaining an understanding both of what individuals experience and how they interpret their experiences (Bluhm et al., 2010). The reason for just one approach is that there are time constraints when carrying out research and there would not be enough time to get all the information necessary, a qualitative approach

seems the better of the two as interviews and previous case studies may help us find out more on progression to retail management for women, rather than carry out a survey where we do not get the necessary information needed to answer our questions. A qualitative approach will give us more information, regarding the semi structured interviews. If a quantitative method was shown we may not get the correct information and answers we need to discover if barriers and inequalities still exist today for women.

The target group for this research is going to be both men and women in retail; my target age is (25-35) as this is deemed the age that most people apply for managerial positions and people are at a mature age where they know if they want a retail management role. My main focus is to research and investigate employees who work in the retail sector and their personal experiences on progression to management if there are any. By exploring both men and women's opinions and perceptions of why women are not progressing in retail management it will help the researcher have a better understanding of closing the gap as to why women do not progress as quickly as men when it comes to retail management positions.

The research framework is defined using the model of 'the onion research' developed by (Saunders et al 2012).It takes into consideration the methodology of studies mentioned in the literature section, as rationale for the methods that have been applied to this research. In doing so, the chapter is divided into six sections and we discuss the most appropriate:

- Philosophy
- Approach
- Strategy
- Methodological choices
- Time horizon
- Techniques and procedures.

4:3 Philosophy

There are two main classes dealing with the philosophy questions: ontology and epistemology, or 'positivist/interpretivist research philosophies' (Saunders et al., 2012:129). Basically, positivism is linked to quantitative methods, while interpretivism is linked to qualitative research. Ontology as a study is interested with the nature of reality, it can also be notable between objectivism and subjectivism and in the end the individual perception is more important than objectivity (Saunders et al. 2012:130). Meanwhile, epistemology is 'concerned with what creates acceptable data in a field of study' (Saunders et al, 2012:132) also suggesting three major frames: positivism, realism and interpretivism groupings. Due to the empirical nature of the study, the student has adopted the interpretivism philosophy because it promotes that it is necessary for the researcher to understand alterations between humans in our role as social players' (Saunders et al., 2012:137). Moreover, the principles, the opinions and the philosophies of the researcher have played a boundless role in deciding the topics to be discussed and the appropriate questions for the interviews. Lastly, the interpretivism philosophy sponsors 'slight testers and in depth investigation into qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2012:140) which fits the difficult investigation of the barrier and inequalities to women progressing into senior retail management.

Interpretive researchers understand that they will both inspire and be influenced by the research motion they are involved with and that a connection between the two will mature certainly. Interpretivists trust that it is important for good study that they evaluate how humans understand actions and that this can be attained through methods other than those employed by the positivist approach (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

4:4 Approach

After having obtained the necessary choice of implementing the interpretivism philosophy taken by the student, in this section the most suitable approach of induction versus deduction will be debated. For this motive, it is essential to recognise the concept of the differing methods and the structures of an explorative study. Ketokivi and Mantere (2010)

(cited in Saunders et al. 2012:143) state that ‘deductive thinking happens when assumption is derived rationally from a set of properties, the assumption being true when all the premises are true.’ On the other hand, the same academics argue that ‘in inductive reasoning, there is a break in the logic argument between the end and the premises observed, the conclusion being ‘judged’ to be supported by the clarifications made.’ Moreover, Saunders et al. (2012:146) we need to highlight the significance of the context in inductive approaches and the use of small sample that suits better this type of investigation. Furthermore, Anderson (2011:147) states that induction is a way of ‘building theory’ with the aim of finding ‘trustworthy clarification actions that have been observed.’ She reviews (2011) the main characteristics of inductive approach that: ‘examines meaning and perceptions, takes context of data into account, allows for incremental expansion of the research process and collects qualitative data, while also accepting researcher participation in the procedures being explored, also accepts the value of deep ‘rich’ statistics that is less generalizable.’ (Anderson, 2011:146). Thus, due to the nature of the explorative study about the barriers and inequalities of female progression in retail management styles, the scholar has applied an inductive approach which fits within the interpretivist philosophy. Inductive research is moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. Inductive reasoning, by its very nature, is more open-ended and exploratory, especially at the beginning (Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006). Inductive reasoning is the right approach for this research as with this method, once a researcher has acknowledged patterns and trends among a set of data, we can then articulate some hypotheses to discover, and finally develop some general conclusions or theories (Crossman, 2016).

4:5 Strategy

A methodological strategy in learning is crucial because it ‘is a plan of action to achieve a goal’ (Saunders et al., 2012:173) and according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) (cited in Saunders et al., 2012:173) ‘it is the methodological link between your philosophy and succeeding choice of procedures to gather and analyse data.’ The nature of explorative studies involves open questions in order to surge information and understanding about a topic. Consequently there is the need of having flexible and adjustable strategies ((Saunders et al., 2012:173). The student has decided to apply the grounded theory

approach to the research due to the fact that its features are more suitable and better in aim of the study of exploring, investigating new extents of networking, glass ceiling and women moving into senior management positions as a body of research within literature. Quinlan (2011:183-184) claims that ‘grounded theory methodology is used when the precise focus of the research is on structuring theory from data and is very useful when researching phenomenon about which little is known.

4:6 Methodological Choice

This study has applied a mono-method choice based on qualitative data collection and investigation of acknowledging the limitations of not using a multi- or mixed-methods due to time constraints. The basis of adopting a qualitative data methodology and semi-structured interviews is based on Anderson who claims (2011): ‘Answers can be probed, enabling interviewees to explain or build on what they have said. In this way data of a ‘rich’ quality can be gathered, that allow for people to provide information about their experiences, feelings and motives. ‘Anderson (2011:188). Nevertheless, the same author (2011:188) warns about the drawbacks of a time consuming process (meeting interviewees, recording/ transcribing talks and data analysis), the difficulty to create information and problems with the generalisability of findings. However the productivity of the process overrules these concerns. Keeping in mind the aim and objectives of the explorative study, the investigator has implemented a flexible and adaptable data collection approach in order to give the opportunities to the sample of female managers and employees to prompt their views, concerns and feelings about their leadership progression into senior retail managers and express their opinions also in regards to sensitive topics, otherwise hardly grasped. In doing so, themes linked to the glass ceiling and networking between genders and their styles of management or the challenges over progression through open and penetrating questions , could have freely been discussed providing abundance of views to the researcher. It is useful to acknowledge the methodology applied in other studies to certify the approach of the researcher, ‘ ‘There is plenty of research to suggest that organisations benefit from having a diverse workforce. Yet in this area of diversity at least, organisations still have work to do. Despite a considerable focus on the issue over many years, the statistics show that women are still under represented in senior leadership and management positions’’(Institute of leadership

& management, no date). The student has decided to select a non-probability judgemental sampling technique in order to answer the research questions and focus the attention to a small group of female and male managers and employee. The benefits of a small group and interviews are there are one to one meetings people don't feel like they are pressured into believing others opinions and could give more information. However, there are challenges, the participants may feel the need to agree with the literature and not give their honest opinions. According to Saunders et al. (2012:287) this option allows a variety of members with different characteristics which produces a number of views and perceptions from the variety of staff taking part in the interview collection'. The five managers/leaders, from different environments and with a wide retail experience, were able to provide insight on their leadership styles, understand the issues linked to gender, critically examine the development of leadership within the retail profession and finally assess changes related to career course. Also, it was essential to reach data fullness to gain varied information.

Limitations:

Although the aim and objective is to gain the answers of inspecting why women do not progress to retail management, there are however limitations when carrying out interviews and researching previous journal articles. There are limits due to people's personal lives and their upbringing on how they should behave in workplaces. People in the interview may feel uncomfortable answering some questions as they may feel there too personal or if referring to studies about women being discriminated at work they may feel the need to be biased and not answer questions honestly. There are also limitations to the amount of people being interviewed; clearly working under time constraints, it would be not possible to get everyone who works in retail and their opinions on barriers to progression for women (Simon and Goes, 2013). By being under a time constraint it limits gathering quantitative as well as qualitative data, also quantitative limits your answers with less general feedback and it may not be reliable to give the best possible outcome to finding out our objective if barriers for women exist in retail management because of family life or how they lead differently to men.

Data Analysis:

From the interviews there will be a recording, so that all information is obtained by the researcher, we will be able to analyse the data through an individual and group perspective. Individual being the views the narrator has from the interviews and comparing it to up to date literature on the barriers to female progression in retail management, a group perspective is gathering and analysing what people have said in their interviews and do their perceptions and opinions match each other or are there different views on why women do not progress in retail management. We need to look at the themes from our findings and explore does the same information keep popping up. The main source of analysis is reading up to date academic literature from previous studies and looking at previous qualitative data on women progressing in retail management and seeing does the same perspective pop up in retail industries in an Irish context.

Ethical Concerns:

There can be a few ethical concerns, such as work colleagues being interviewed; they may believe their information may be shared; however this is not going to happen. The researcher will explain to retail employees that their information will not be shared with others and the information given will be destroyed after no later than five years. Another ethical consideration is that all files and recordings will be kept locked away or on computer files which no one else has access to other than me. Lastly National College of Ireland operates an ethical conduct which can also be provided to people involved.

4:7 Time Horizon

According to Saunders et al. (2012:190-191) there are two ways of designing research: 'the snapshot taken at a particular moment' or 'a diary or a series of snapshot' which leads to a cross-sectional or to a longitudinal research perspective. The same authors highlight the constraint of time available to the researcher as one of the main factors influencing the choices. The cross-sectional horizon is often applied using both quantitative or qualitative (or mixed) research methodologies. The longitudinal studies have 'the main strengths to study change and development' of phenomena, but take more time to be carried out. Considering the time constraint of the researcher, a cross-sectional horizon was applied to

this study, according to (Rivers, 2003).the cross sectional studies there are both advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages of Cross-Sectional Study

The advantages of cross-sectional study include:

- Used to prove and/or disprove assumptions
- Not costly to perform and does not require a lot of time
- Captures a specific point in time
- Contains multiple variables at the time of the data snapshot
- The data can be used for various types of research

Many findings and outcomes can be analysed to create new theories/studies or in-depth research

Disadvantages of Cross-Sectional Study

The disadvantages of cross-sectional study include:

- Cannot be used to analysed behaviour over a period to time
- Does not help determine cause and effect
- The timing of the snapshot is not guaranteed to be representative
- Findings can be flawed or skewed if there is a conflict of interest with the funding source
- May face some challenges putting together the sampling pool based on the variables of the population being studied

4:8 Techniques and Procedures

In this research, techniques and procedures were applied as following:

- Themes were drawn from the broad literature within family life, if the glass ceiling still exists today, is networking important in progressing to senior management positions.
- Aim and objectives were drawn from the literature review based on apparent research gaps and the most suitable research methodology was applied.
- Open questions were prepared upon the most relevant topics discussed in the literature review chapter avoiding risks of bias.
- For ethical reasons, the investigator informed the interviewees about the scope of the study and asked their free written consensus to be interviewed.
- All the interviews were recorded and transcribed, therefore a thematic analysis was drawn through the literature and categories; then themes were defined grouping the main emergent arguments using a constant comparative method
- Finally a comparison of the research findings was established with the main topics present in the literature review.

In conclusion, in this chapter the most suitable methodology research applied to the explorative study of barriers and inequalities to female progression in retail management and has been clarified and justified according to the research philosophy (interpretivism), the approach (induction), the strategy (grounded theory), the methodological choice (qualitative mono-method) and time horizon (cross-sectional).

The procedure of collecting data that can present applicable aspects of methods, which is used in this thesis is articles, journals, books, and internet. During reading and analysing some information from above mentioned sources in the literature review, the related data can be picked up and gathered in order to show the appropriate research data.

Methodology is a very important while conducting any type of research; it helps to follow how the study/investigation can be accomplished. Qualitative method is one of the best approaches to use for study and research question. This type of research helps me as investigator to understand and explain the meaning of leadership for men and women. The qualitative research has the possibility to form a whole from different parts (Higher, 2008).

I am using qualitative method in order to make research by choosing, gathering relevant information, using an articles/journals, books, and information from websites. Qualitative method is appropriate to make analyses of research data, give answers on research question and will bring out to the openings or findings. To open something new is equal to make findings and understand the meaning of research. Taking into consideration this, I would state that research is significant because of real and actual importance of management progression for women in retail positions.

In the next chapter, the researcher will present and discuss in depth the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 Analysis and findings

5:1 Introduction:

This chapter will talk about the data analysis and findings from the data collection stage undertaken. The chapter will begin by setting out the demographic profile of the interviewees. Such an analysis is an important starting point to understand the background of responses and experiences. Hence the approach to analysis of the interview data will be described. The rest of the chapter will describe the findings relating to the research objectives under study, namely:

- i) Discussing if barriers and inequalities still exist in retail management
- ii) Examination of the link between family life and women progressing to management
- iii) Assessment of the nature of women and if there are promotional barriers today.

The chapter will conclude with an overview of the findings and how they connect to each other.

5:2 Demographic Profile of Interviewees

Similar to the study conducted by Oshgbemi (2008), the research has included background, working environment and training data as important characteristics when looking at questions linking to senior management positions, as such Table 1 sets out the demographic profile of interviewees who participated in this study.

The participants described in Table 5-1 were both a mix of females and males, this was a purposeful choice borne out of the fact that this research concerns women's experiences and supports men's in leadership and senior management. Within the sample there were interviewees selected from a variety of retail firms, positions and experience levels, thereby providing a more widespread view of experiences across sectors. The next section sets out the data analysis method adopted as outlined in the research methodology chapter, this research is supported by an interpretivist research position using a theory building approach. Interviews were used as the research tool. The data which arose from the interview phase was value loaded and very rich in nature. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of interview participants. The interview transcriptions were remarkably inclusive with interviewees willing to reveal in some cases very personal experiences of their time in management or staff like experiences when choosing management. Given the 'richness' of the data a detailed stage of analysis was necessary. The approach to data analysis of the wide qualitative data was the use of noting, wherein several restatements and views of the data was considered at each noting stage. The research analysis noting included of four main stages. Stage 1 was open coding where line by line coding was undertaken for each interview. Afterward the open codes were planned, reviewed and prearranged into categories which led to the eventual development of themes for each question.

The participants through their answers offer a diversity of themes when describing their views and experiences on barriers to female progression in retail management and in this section the main topics will be presented along with significant extracts of interviews. The key topics related to barriers to female progression in retail management are highlighted by the participants, they are family life, glass ceiling, networking and promotional ladders. Challenges and opportunities are similar but divergences are evident in gender and leadership perception.

Table 5:1

Manager	Type of organisation	Role in organisation
A	Grocery Department	Junior Manager
B	Fashion Department	Staff Member
C	Footwear Store	Manager of Store
D	Grocery Department	Assistant Manager
E	Sky Retail	Team Leader

5:3 Data Analysis: Emergent Themes

The themes which emerged from the data analysis phase have been sub categorised into themes relating to the barriers and inequalities to female progression in retail management section 1 family life, section 2 glass ceiling, section 3 mentoring and section 4 promotional ladders for women.

5:4 Family life

During the qualitative study most of the participants described their family lifestyle as the most important and being a mother as one of the main factors shaping or influencing their approach. For instance: from conducting five interviews it was discovered that three of these people had children, two being women and one being a man.

Manager A has alleged, having a career didn't affect progressing to a junior manager, also agreeing to this statement was manager C, *'having kids didn't affect my career as my wife stayed at home'*.

Flexible working arrangements for women don't seem to exist in any of these retail roles according to all five interviewees. Manager A asserts *'my job made no exception to me; I believe I was treated worse after having a child. I worked all the late shifts on occasions such as Halloween, Christmas and Easter and all my male colleague managers would*

finish earlier and none of them had children'. Manager B states, 'I had to give up working when my kids were young as my job could not offer me flexible arrangements, it is only now that my kids are older that I can go out and work a full eight hour shift'. Manager D however has the complete opposite view he declares, 'when mothers or fathers are let down by their babysitters there are emergency childcare services, so men and women don't have to take the day off work and how the organisation does not want you to miss time off, these are flexible arrangements for both women and men when stuck in a situation where you have to take time off because you have been let down'.

All five interviewees felt that child care costs were the main reason that women did not go back to work or opted for part time positions to be there for their children. *'I was better off not going back to work full time as the money I was earning was actually less than the childcare costs',* Manager B believes this is one of the main factors why she never went back to work when her children were small. Manager C states *'I worked full time and my wife stayed at home because I was earning a lot more money than her and if we both worked the cost of childcare would have been more than her salary so we both agreed she would be better staying at home looking after the children'.*

There was a mixed opinion on senior managers supporting women when entering senior positions three out of the five confirmed they were offered support and guidance but from the three who said they were offered support and guidance through management, two were actually men. Manager C and E said their managers pushed to them to their highest potential and want to see them do well, Manager A affirms, *'I am not treated any differently to the men I work with, my manager pushes me to my limits every day, he makes me work harder and shows me full time retail work is not easy, management is not sitting behind a desk for eight hours a day you are constantly on the go working on all different areas of the firm and different tasks'.*

As the literature suggests that women may not opt for senior management positions after having children because there are barriers in their way or other reasons why they have not made it to senior management, but we cannot take this statement truly, from the five interviews managers A, B and D all agreed they would prefer to stay at home with their children rather than work in a full time senior management position, Managers C and E do

not have children but both agreed if they did they would prefer the option of staying at home with their families rather than work but as Manager A pointed out *'I would love to stay at home with my daughter but unfortunately I cannot as me and my husband both need to work full time to pay our bills and our mortgage'*.

5:5 Glass ceiling

The majority of men and women being interviewed still believe that men are being promoted a lot faster than women in senior management roles, for instance Manager B confirms,

'Men have more of an edge when being chosen for senior management roles, there are still barriers when achieving senior management positions for women, but there are much greater opportunities today for women, like education which wasn't as accessible in my day''.

Manager A however disagrees with men being promoted faster and she stresses that *'women can progress into senior management positions just as quick as men but unfortunately not enough women promote themselves or put themselves forward for these positions as women may be lacking the confidence to put themselves forward for senior roles'*.

Although there is a mixed view on women needing to be more confident and others believing the glass ceiling is still visible in today's society, Manager E declares *'men are being promoted faster to an extent when it comes to senior management positions in retail as sometimes it is just an easier option to choose men as there is less barriers or complications on arranging flexibility for women who have families'*.

In today's culture men and women are meant to have equivalent positions and be treated equally to the other, but from conducting interviews gender diversity still seems an issue with most of our interviewees, Manager A has a dilemma on gender diversity, *'it does not so much exist but then again when look at the bigger picture it does because I am the only manager who is a woman working in the store besides the HR manager who is a woman, the more I think of it my store manager is a male, the area manager is male so yes, gender*

diversity is an issue, why are there not more women in senior management positions in my store'.

From a male opinion and view they still agree gender diversity exists to an extent and Manager E confirms *'gender diversity exists, but it's improved over the years of course and it will exist if women don't work towards their goals as management positions are not just handed out to people you need to work for them, another reason for gender diversity in management is women can't always be flexible and stay that extra hour to work because of their kids and families'.*

Since the majority of the interviewees believed that gender diversity existed and the glass ceiling was still visible, it was an obvious question of do we think women can overcome the glass ceiling and if so how do women go about overcoming these issues and barriers that exists, manager C feels women can overcome these barriers *'if organisations became a bit more flexible and offered some sort of child care arrangements then maybe more women would be in senior management roles'.*

Manager D has said from his experience of working in retail *'women have definitely put some cracks in the glass ceiling, they could overcome this invisible barrier if women were more career orientated rather than family focused as the women who put their career first are more reliable managers and will climb the ladder a lot more quickly than women who have kids'.*

The glass ceiling relates back to women with families and the reason for this invisible barrier is women are not going to progress to high senior roles as they have kids, Manager E confirms *'of course women can overcome the glass ceiling and reach management positions but women just need to plan their lives, there is no point in women planning to go for a senior management role if they are pregnant or plan on having a kid because there not going to get it managers have to think women will need time off and maternity leave which means there not going to be able to carry out their senior management roles'.*

This topic has given an insight into the glass ceiling and women can overcome these barriers if they were maybe more confident or they could make their lives a lot more flexible.

5:6 Mentoring

Mentoring is an important role for both men and women when training and being guided into senior retail management roles; however this topic was discussed to see do women not progress because mentors are men.

All managers agreed that men mentoring women has no effect on them progressing into management, Managers A and C have been both been trained by male managers and said it never stopped them progressing into management positions. Manager E believes *'it is not down to the mentor why women do not progress it's down to the person's capabilities to carry out the role that prevents them from moving to senior roles'*.

Even though mentoring is not an issue, we still look at the scenario if the chances of management are small after being mentored. The Majority of managers agreed that no it is not an issue, Managers A, D and E all agreed that it had no effect on their progression into management as they have worked with both male and females in work, However manager B has a different outlook, Manager B considers from her years of working in the retail sector that men *'do not like being over powered by a woman or feeling that a woman has more authority over them'*.

When retail opportunities arise in organisations to travel abroad, very few women take the opportunity to leave and work in a different country, these interviews gave a better insight into if these barriers exist when travelling abroad. Manager A proclaims *'there are no retail opportunities to travel abroad, but after sometime management staff are moved to other stores and this isn't always a good plan as I could be further from home and this does not suit me as I have a young child which means it takes me longer to get home'*. All interviewees agreed that retail travel opportunities do not happen for women, especially if you are a woman with a family. Manager D goes on to say *'women may be offered to work abroad if they do not have a family and their single'*. Managers C, D and E believe its women's choice not to take travel opportunities abroad because they turn them down due to leaving their families and being away from home.

Cultural practises of men being managers and women being left out of the boardroom is still a barrier to women progressing to management. Manager A *'at times I do feel left out*

when it comes to meetings, there is sometimes harmless fun but it sometimes makes me feel uncomfortable'. Managers B and D also agree there is very few women in board room meetings, Manager E agrees *'there are women in boardrooms if we look at multinational companies as a whole but the percentage of women in board rooms is still lower than women would have hoped'*.

Building relationships is an important aspect when working as a senior retail manager and it is necessary to get along with staff members, clients, customers, suppliers and so forth.

All five managers have agreed that building relationships is an important aspect for both men and women. They all consider building relationships inside and outside of work will help them progress to management and widen their opportunities to senior roles, there is no reason for women not to build relationships with others, Manager A, *'networks don't narrow for women unless they choose to let them narrow'*.

The majority of managers feel that women have different traits and characteristics compared to their male colleagues. Managers A, B and C consider women more sympathetic and are a lot softer when it comes to difficult situations and dealing with problems, Manager C confirms *'women can be sensitive towards certain situations but they are more likely to build friendships and relationships'*. Manager D completely disagrees with women having different traits and being a lot more sensitive, *'Women don't differ in traits or lead differently to men it is down to the personality of the individual themselves and how they carry out scenarios at work'*.

5:7 Promotional ladders for women

Integration with colleagues is very important when it comes to management and all five of the interviewees agreed on this statement, if you don't integrate your just left to the side and this could lead to tension in the work place if you're not getting one with your colleagues according to Managers A and B. Many of the managers interview established that promotional ladders don't necessarily stop for women, there just however slower to get to, Manager E points out, *'women who have planned on getting pregnant or who are out on maternity leave may in fact start from the bottom of their career when their back and another employee may have come along worked really hard in the role and showed*

the capability to move up to management, making women with families start from the bottom again'.

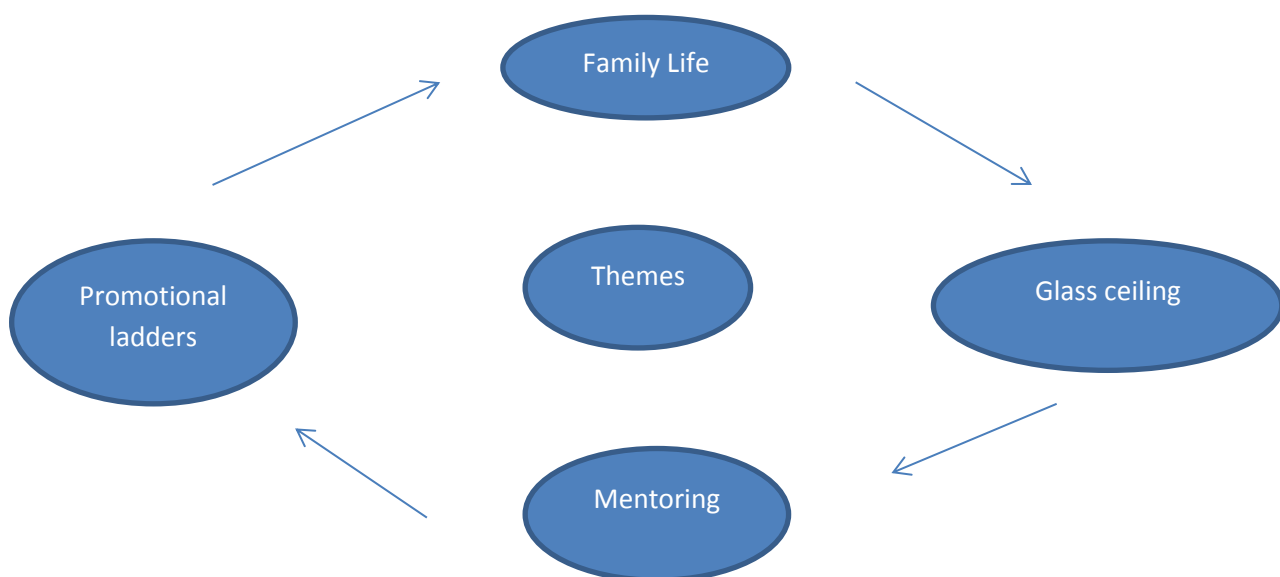
Need to also consider do women not progress or put themselves forward for senior management positions because they do not have a senior woman role model. Managers A, B and C all agree that a female or male role model does not stop them promoting and also settle to the fact that a woman mentor or trainee does not make it any different or change their minds when going for promotion. Manager D feels that a woman mentor could possibly ease women into wanting or opting for senior management roles. Manager E *'definitely agree that a female manager who can coach junior managers and offer expertise on how they reached senior management roles will drive and inspire junior managers to progress hire to the role of retail senior manager'.*

The last question all relates back to family life and why women are not reaching these senior positions. Manager B says *'women are not climbing the ladder so quickly because of their families and having to take time off for their kids'.* Manager D follows on *'family life is the biggest barrier due to women leaving work because of maternity or childcare costs, senior managers cannot rely on these women that they will not need time off from work. If women were single ad had no families there would be no reason behind women not progressing into senior retail management',* according to Manager D.

5:8 Conclusion:

The data analysis and findings from the semi-structured interviews over the four research objectives have led to highlight four overarching themes: family life, the glass ceiling, mentoring and networking and leading to promotions Figure 5-8. All these elements have been mentioned by the 5 retail male and female managers/staff in describing their experience of progressing to retail management, examination over time and in relation to change in their career route.

Figure 5-8: Link to Overarching Questions –



This chapter has dealt with the data analysis of the mono-qualitative approach and semi-structured interview of 5 male and female staff in order to fulfil the four research objectives attempting to add knowledge to the areas of family life, glass ceiling and promotions. In doing so, a “Data analysis coding path” was prepared and accompanying to the “Interview Guide”. The interviews were firstly analysed using open codes, then types and lastly larger themes emerged from the participants’ answers. It was also necessary to list a “Demographic profiles” of the interviewees with the aim to find connections with their environments and experiences. The themes were divided by the four objectives and then linked to topics presented in the “Interview Guide”. The richness of the answers received was analysed and assembled by main themes, but it was also necessary to select and to prioritise them due to the length of the research. Within the objective of defining barriers and inequalities to female progression in retail management, strong importance was drawn on family in shaping the reasons for lesser women in senior roles, however flexibility of methods and focus on why women were not reaching the top positions or was an important topic discussed. In evaluating if gender diversity still exists when looking at senior managers and if the glass ceiling still exists today, the participants stressed the development of their approaches and the importance of improving their capabilities through constant learning processes. All agreed on women needing to be more confident and putting themselves forward for their pitches, but not on the role of policies

and procedure, mainly linked to reasons of non-gender diversity. Lastly, within the objective of women within senior roles over a career development, the interviewees underlined the importance of receiving support from top managers, but also to the significance of helping and developing their staff and the influence of their role models.

If we look back at chapter three of our research aims and objectives and look now at our analysis and findings after we have carried out our qualitative analysis we can clearly see we managed to reach our goals and get a better understanding of women progressing into management from a female and male viewpoint.

In the next chapter a discussion over the interviews findings will link the main topics here presented with the previous research carried out in the same fields.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6:1 Introduction

In this chapter the discussion of the key findings presented in the previous chapter will be interconnected with theories and models debated in the literature and results linked with previous studies piloted in similar areas. However, as mentioned in the literature review, the research linked to barriers to progression in management over time is limited. The construction of the chapter will follow the four objectives questions and will highlight the key topics which have emerged from the qualitative investigation.

6:2 Family life:

All the interviewees confirmed family life is a major factor when going for senior management roles. According to Parker 2015, women who experienced interruptions in their career such as having a family said it affected them negatively when going back to work. From our interviews the majority of the participants said having a family would not and did not affect their career, Manager B however agreed with the literature and said it affected her career but that was not necessarily the organisations fault but more so the price of child care and having to give up work because no flexible arrangements were necessary.

Broadbridge 2010 goes on to confirm that retailing operates 24/7 and that it would be practical to make flexible arrangement for management. All interviewees confirmed that flexibility rarely happened Manager A states she would work long working days and ten hour shifts, the majority agreed there was no flexible time made to mothers or giving special arrangements to staff members with families. Therefore flexibility in management cannot be seen possible yet as you need a manager who is available to work full time hours and be in the organisation during working hours.

Cherry 2010 claims that women face barriers in organisations after have children as they find it difficult coming back to work after having children, this in fact is the complete opposite, from carrying out a qualitative analysis it is now clear that there are no barriers in an organisation due to having families but the issue is childcare costs and the majority of the interviewees agreed that's their barrier, women have decided to stay at home and not work as the cost of childcare is too expensive. Manager D specified that he went out to work after he and his wife had children because he was earning a lot more and the price of childcare costs were greater than his wife's actual wage, this proves why the statistics of women who work outside the family home is a lot lower than other countries such as the UK, Manager A however has to work full time and her husband as other factors take into account such as the mortgage and household bills.

Cherry 2010 also confirms that for those women looking to move into senior management positions there usually is no support or development offered to these women. From the five interviews four of the participants disagreed with this statement and Manager A confirmed her manager pushes her to her full potential. Manager B agreed she is not pushed to her full potential but this women is comfortable in her position as a staff member so we cannot say her job don't push her towards her goals she's just too comfortable to move forward and accept a bigger challenge, also the fact she feels she is too old for a management position and would not be there much longer in her job so maybe this is why management may not push her if she does not plan on staying long term in a managerial role.

From the discussion on family life it is evident that people who work in the retail sector have a different outlook on what the literature has said, as manager D says 'there are no

barriers women just need to show more initiative if they want to move up the corporate ladder’.

6:3 Glass ceiling in organisations:

Taylor 2015 stated that the advancement of women in managerial positions has improved over the years but the progression of women into managerial positions is still slow and this could link into organisations not having flexible arrangements for mothers. The majority of manager’s claim there is no flexibility offered to women Manager E also feels that when both men and women go for managerial positions they are not offered any flexibility they are treated just like everyone else, in terms at looking at the real picture it is not fair to treat one person differently just because they have children, staff members who don’t have children will feel they are not treated the same as women with children.

Taylor also confirmed that gender diversity has improved over the years but still women feel they don’t have the same access to men when it comes down to promotions or career progression in management, from our studies and analysis gender diversity still exists so this statement is on part of what the interviewees have agreed also agree that gender diversity has improved and is not extreme as it was and of course this issue is going to happen and gender diversity exists if women cannot make themselves flexible in their roles and stay and work longer hours gender diversity will exist as most times it is the women who decides not to go for management positions as they do not want to leave their families for any longer than they have to.

However, just because the glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that both men and women still believe exists it can be broken, Runnheim Olson, 2012 claims that with the help of good sponsors and mentors and other women’s opinions they can break the glass ceiling, our interviewees also feel that women can break through the glass ceiling by being more flexible and putting themselves out there for managerial jobs, if jobs were more flexible then the glass ceiling could be broken Manager C suggested Manager D and E feel women need to be a bit more career orientated and maybe not plan on starting a family when their considering a senior management position. It could be considered a fact that maybe with the help of a female role model and supportive mentor women may progress more in management but again this is down to women themselves if they want to progress further

in their career, the feminist group as quoted in the literature state that the glass ceiling is a major barrier that is transparent in organisations but according to our interviewees the glass ceiling only becomes a barrier if women let it happen of course women can break through today and move up in management but again the situation from our interviewees leads back to family and women not wanting to leave their kids to put their careers first. Studies from the literature showed the majority of organisations were making flexible arrangements for mothers but our qualitative study proved differently, the candidates feel there is no support offered or flexible arrangements when working in the retail sector.

6:4 Mentoring:

Mentoring is seen as a barrier to female progression in retail management, according to Paludi, 2013, women are faced with a lack of social support and are giving a lesser experience compared to men when being mentored. From conducting interviews all of our participants agreed mentoring had no effect on their career progression and the five candidates agreed that working with a male or female manager did not bother them. The literature went on to state that women miss out on retail opportunities because of lack of female mentoring but that is not true, Manager B confirms male mentors better understand women.

According to Torrington, Hall, and Taylor, 2005, women often find it difficult to break through to the male management environment and the majority of the managers interviewed agreed there are higher volumes of men in the board rooms and progressing and getting offered retail opportunities abroad but the participants involved also settle on the fact that women are not going to be offered opportunities abroad or move up in management if they do not take these positions. Paludi says sometimes women are left out intentionally or unintentionally but from our interviews women may often feel left out private jokes among male colleagues but they do not do it intentionally. It is only natural for males to get along better with males and vice a versa but it again leads back to family life as discussed women are not going to enter the boardrooms if they don't feel they want to if they have families.

From previous studies and the literature mentioned, Harriman, 1996 affirms that the networks for women narrow rather than widen because they just keep relationships with

people inside the business rather than build networks and relationships outside the business, Manager D disagrees with the literature and confirms that networks will of course narrow if women build relationships with others in work. There was a half and half agreement on this statement on women building networks and relationships with others. There is no necessary reason for women's networks not to widen; Manager A also upholds the statement that women are not going to widen their networks if they do not make an effort. We cannot agree with this literature it is an obvious reason that women need to make the effort and put themselves out there to build relationships if they don't of course their networks are going to stay narrow.

It's a stereotypical opinion that men and women differ in their traits and characteristics by being more sensitive to others feelings; the women who participated in this study agreed women are more sympathetic and softer in their approach to difficult situation, but cannot say they are better at managers. Women again have these traits and have the opportunity to be managers but choose not to because of families.

6:5 Promotional ladders for women in staff positions and line positions

Segregation can become an issue in the workplace if integration does not happen, Malhotra, 2013, feels if women don't integrate it leads to more male managers in the organisation, manager B says if you don't integrate of course you're going to be left behind. Cannot just state with the literature that women's chances of promotions will be smaller because if not integrating, the same scenario applies to men in organisations. If men don't mix or integrate with colleagues they too can't be considered for management positions as being a retail manager you need to mix and integrate in order to be considered for a senior management role in retail as management deal with other staff members, customers, suppliers and other managers.

Padavic and Reskin, 2002, states women are often treated as a minority in some organisations, as promotional ladders are much longer for men than they are for women, in reality as Manager B supports the statement that ladders are not shorter for women they just take longer to get to. Ladders are not shorter for women unless they let them be maybe moving up takes longer as women don't move up to senior roles until their children are older and less dependent on their mothers. Women who put their career first are going to

progress more and it's not down to organisations not choosing women with families for senior roles but rather the women themselves who don't want that extra work or responsibility of staying late to resolve issues from that day.

The literature goes on to claim that women in lesser senior roles cannot be mentors or good role models to young women who want to progress further. Both women and men who took part in the interview believe this statement was nonsense. Any women can be a good role states manager E it does not matter if you are management or not. Women can offer other women their experiences of work and help others achieve their goals and move forward to senior roles in retail management. Women and men are more than happy to help with staff progressing to management and it does not factor in gender differences as from our previous research on networking neither female nor males have an issue with mentoring.

This discussion had a completely different outlook and differences emerged of people's opinions who worked in the retail sector compared to the literature. Some parts of the literature and people's perceptions and opinions matched with previous studies. The participants disagreed with the majority of the literature and felt actual working in the retail sector was completely different to what previous scholars had studies. The outcome in the discussion is a dissimilar outlook towards the literature.

6:6 Unusual Findings

Before undertaking the qualitative investigation, the investigator did not expect to come across themes that the interviewees clearly presented in their answers:

- People development and many women who have gone back to work after having kids
- High level of attentiveness and responsibility for building relationships with others
- Strong continuous learning process of the female senior retail managers

Summary of the Key Findings

All the interviewees present similar expectations in relation to four research questions and stress common emergent topics within each area, as such Figure 6-1 sets out:

Figure 6-1: Summary of the key findings

- Barriers to progression are not down to the organisation but down to women themselves not leaving their families
- Childcare costs are still an issue for females when they are looking to go back to work as the cost of childcare is too expensive
- The glass ceiling still exists but women can break through this if they want to progress to management

6:7 Conclusion

In this section, the scholar has presented the key finding of the explorative study and attempted to find links with theories, movements and lessons related to the four research objectives. Within the section of family life, women looking for flexibility and child care costs for women have been challenged with the updated literature. Within the second objective, the impact of the glass ceiling and can women overcome these barriers has been confronted with similar studies. Mentoring and promotional ladders for women in retail have diversified changes and reflections on the retail profession have been evaluated according to the last trends in the field. Despite the high correspondence and similarities found with other studies, the researcher acknowledges the limitation of her findings due to the restricted number of female retail managers interviewed.

Implications for female managers can be seen as recommendations for female managers based on the experiential data, examination and conclusions resulting from the thesis.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, the investigator has obtained the aims and objectives of the empirical investigation over the barriers and inequalities for women progressing into management. This learning has scanned the associated literature review and gaps in the area, clarified the rationale for the methodological approach taken and presented and discussed information. In the last chapter the key discoveries are highlighted along with the recommendations drawn upon the growing themes generalised from the semi-structured interviews. The scholar's personal learning statement will conclude the dissertation.

7:1 Key Findings

The most applicable findings linked to the four research aims (family life, the glass ceiling, mentoring and promotional ladders) correlated to the five retail managers under the semi-structured interviews analysis can be summarised as follows:

Family life:

There is strong emphasis put on family life as this is one of the main challenges for women looking to progress in management. Flexibility is still an issue in organisations and most companies do not suit women with families or change work rotas for women. Childcare was a major factor for women when deciding to go back to work. However the study also showed women prefer to stay at home when they have children rather than opt for senior management roles.

The Glass ceiling:

Even though times have changed women are still facing an invisible barrier when working, women feel men are moving faster into senior roles. However, women feel they may be partially to blame when breaking through the glass ceiling and being more confident.

Mentoring:

Mentoring is not an issue for women unless they make it an issue. Women can progress and build networks outside of their social group and expand their careers by getting to know more people.

Promotional ladders

Promotional ladders are smaller for women as they choose to let them be small when they have families, women can climb the corporate ladder and reach senior retail management roles if they are as career focused as they are family focused.

Some of females are making progress in taking management roles in organisations. It is clear that women can go all the way to the top today and it is clear that female leaders face some problems as others, including men. Women with a high potential are in unbelievable

demand, so companies need to look at how to retain these women. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:238/fulltext02>

In the last chapter, the key findings of the explorative study of 5 male and female retail staff and management, along with practical recommendations, limitations, further research and the personal learning statement will conclude the dissertation process.

Recommendations

In relation to the research objectives and the key findings generated by the semi structured Interviews with 5 retail male and female managers, at strategies and practice levels the following recommendations could facilitate women in their careers:

- Create more job flexibility within organisations for women with families
- Have a childcare facility available as part of the work organisation
- Create more support in organisations for women and push them to management at the same pace as men
- Create a company policy to have 30% of women in senior management roles as it currently does not stand this high if we look at statistics less than a third of women are in senior positions (McGuinness, 2015)

Implications of Findings

In order to implement the recommendations above we need to set a realistic time frame

- Job flexibility can be implemented if part time work or job sharing was available. Although it is difficult to job share and find people with the same sets of skills is challenging, it can be implemented and from our introduction Broadbridge claims that retail management can be done part time. Job sharing could work if management hired staff members internally with the right skills who they know well and know which staff are capable of carrying out a management role
- Childcare facilities are expensive and can take a large amount of time to build a childcare facility alongside your organisation, in the long run it is not a profit making organisation but an organisation would be better off long term. Fewer

women would give up working and maybe more women would take on senior roles if their working organisation offered cheaper childcare services that made it a lot more flexible for women to go back to work.

- From our qualitative study we know women are not supported the same way as men, If a support session was opened once a week to women and offered them career advice and support and asked women are there improvements which can be made in the organisation, this type of session could be low-priced to run as the support offered is internal and advice on progression would also be free of charge
- Having 30% of your women work force in senior management is not going to happen overnight but more needs to be done about women in senior roles. If flexibility was offered in organisations maybe then more women would enter managerial positions or get women who are career focused rather than family focused into senior roles and once more women are in senior roles maybe the junior managers may decide to progress into senior management.

Personal Learning Statement

After having accomplished the research process in order to reach the aim and objectives of the dissertations, the student is more mindful of the data and the stages necessary to carry out a qualitative investigation and report the main findings.

The writer has cultured how to set academic goals, have a critical and side thinking towards topics and how to link research questions all along the experimental examination. However, if the researcher were doing the study over again, she would create a different structural thinking and writing and try to clearly highlight each stage distinctly, and of course revise them continuously.

- Develop a well framed network
- Carry out a qualitative method for the study
- Maybe dig deeper in research and see are there distinct barriers which may stand in women's way of progressing to management

- Get more people involved in the research if carrying out a qualitative analysis again to get more viewpoints on women in management

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Appendices

Questions from interviews

Family life

- Personal question which does not have to be answered – Do you have children
- Did having children affect your career progression
- Is it difficult to manage working and having a family at home
- Does your job offer flexible arrangements i.e do you work full time/part time
- Does your manager support you in your role and push you towards your full potential
- Is childcare a factor when working full time and the price of childcare today
- Would you prefer to stay at home on a full time basis or would you prefer to work full time in your career and progress towards your goals

Glass ceiling

- The advancement of women is still an issue in senior positions today. What are your views on this statement
- Is gender diversity a factor to consider in your work organisation
- Do you think you, yourself as a person need to be more productive and push yourself towards your own goals
- Is management still considered a man's role? Are men being promoted faster than women in senior roles
- Do you believe women can break through the glass ceiling? How could they overcome the barriers of the glass ceiling

Mentoring

- Is mentoring an issue which affects women from progressing into management
- Are women's chances of management smaller because of mentors being malr or are men only mentoring men for management
- Are women given less opportunities to travel abroad

- Do you think it is important to build relationships and connections with others and not just the same sex
- Cultural practices – are women numbers still low when it comes to women in the boardroom
- Are women's networks widening or narrowing when they build relationships outside of work
- It is a stereotypical opinion women differ in their traits and characteristics to men – what is your opinion on this

Promotional ladder

- If women or men don't integrate at work would this cause a divide in the workplace
- Are promotional ladders shorter for women in your company
- Do you feel women coaching junior managers can help break the cycle of men in management
- Are women not reaching or being chosen for promotions because they have families
- Are there even barriers for women when looking to opt for promotions