

**An Exploratory Study into The Job Expectations of  
Postgraduate Students Due to Enter the Workforce in  
Ireland**

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## Abstract

This study seeks to explore the job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. The absence of research on postgraduate students and especially from the job expectations position is of precise interest in the context of an increasingly growing and important educational sector in Ireland. The study area which is yet to be conducted in an Irish context seeks to analyze postgraduates expectations of the workforce which could present interesting result for various employers who will be recruiting postgraduate students into their organization and postgraduate students graduating in the coming years.

The researcher concentrated the research question on Postgraduate Student: An exploratory study into the job expectations of postgraduate students, emphasising on those who are due to enter the workforce in Ireland. A cross sectional survey was conducted for this study and all observation and responses were noted and gathered using a qualitative approach. A semi-structured interview was chosen in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic and deduce rich quality data while allowing participants openly provide their views and opinion on the topic.

Also, Braun and Clarke thematic analysis was adopted in allowing both new and existing themes unfold form the data. The respondent chosen for the study were postgraduate students from three different colleges with a mix of Irish and international students. The participants were selected via agreeable and convenience sampling.

Subsequently, several remarkable findings were uncovered in relations to various area of postgraduates job expectations. Career progression opportunities Pay and incentives and training and development were considered a priority. The three above stated themes were also considered priority by postgraduate students when considering career choice amongst job stability and security and work-life balance and flexibility. Participants mentioned that the implementation of the various mentioned expectations may help attract, motivate and retain talented postgraduate students and a major reason for pursuing a postgraduate degree.

# Declarations

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## Abbreviations

European Centre for the development of Vocational Training	<b>CEDEFOP</b>
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	<b>CIPD</b>
European Union	<b>EU</b>
Higher Education Institution	<b>HEIs</b>
Irish Universities Association	<b>IUA</b>
Discipline of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics	<b>STEM</b>
United Kingdom	<b>UK</b>
United State of America	<b>USA</b>

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the Study

In the year 2017, there has been a significant increase in the demand for postgraduate students making third level education more accessible than ever. According to the Irish Universities Association IUA (2017), there was an increase in enrolment of full-time education from 95,000 in 2014 and 2015 to 107,114 in 2017, making Ireland known for having the most educated workforce. Postgraduate students who are known to pursue postgraduate education in a chosen area for a more advanced qualification, knowledge and skills have led to the expansion in higher education system which continues to help drive Ireland economic and social development while setting new figures to cement Ireland position within the European Union (OECD 2016). The enrolment of 64,500 postgraduate students in the past year in Ireland has brought about an increase in postgraduate education which is termed as required and an important factor for raising high-qualified human power needed in developing and raising skilled workforce in a developed country like Ireland to remain competitive (Higher Education Authority 2018)

In 2016, Ireland economy gradually experienced an upturn, postgraduates encountered a more welcoming economic climate while business struggled to find the required talent to fuel their growth. The government commitment in liaison with national training fund aimed at reducing unemployment rate and creating 266,000 jobs between 2014-2020, has lead the department of education and skills to develop a new national skills strategy targeted at ensuring that Ireland has the appropriate skills to attract, grow and retain job opportunities while maintaining a stable economic and investment growth (Ibec 2017) . Although there is a skill shortage for required talent in several sectors, there is also the need for 400,000 workers to be replaced with those leaving the workforce in 2020 (Central Statistics Office,2017).

Despite the continuous changing needs, skills and expectations of postgraduates, the skill packages and career expectations of employers remain unchanged, in fact, employers assume high expectations of the level of proficiency from postgraduate students (Stephens,2015). Although Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

(CIPD, 2018) has indicated there has been a tremendous increase of 65% in externally sourcing for talents especially amongst postgraduate students. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP, 2016) published a list of five sectors which include physicians, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), nurse's teachers and midwives who are experiencing a lack of qualified individuals for open positions across the European Union (EU) which has a significant impact on the national economy.

Ten years on the Irish economy has started to develop again, turning Ireland into a European focal point for numerous organizations although it is agreed by expert that Brexit will bring about uncertainty and differences to the Irish employment market. Given the ever-changing economic situation after the recession, the demand for postgraduate students who are considered to be technologically advanced, influenced by the digital revolution and ambitious have different expectations of the workplace without realizing that employers also have expectations which leave them facing unanticipated work situations (CIPD, 2018).

Although the literature varies with respect to their expectations towards the workforce, general research has shown that graduates value flexibility and work-life balance (KPMG, 2017; Twenge *et al.*, 2010). Coates (2017) in his survey analyzed the significance of understanding the essential needs and expectations of postgraduate students acknowledging that the wrong talent could be a major competitive disadvantage to an organization. Although existing research reviews graduate perceptions, expectation, values, job preference or generational differences at the workplace (Coates, 2017; Lyons, Schweitzer and Ng, 2015), a comprehensive study focusing on post-graduate student expectation of the workforce is missing.

This research will be exploring existing literature on employer job expectations and will be testing it against job expectations of postgraduate students within Ireland. It will include gaining an in-depth knowledge of what post-graduate job expectations are and to determine if there is an alignment on these expectations. The motive behind conducting this research in Ireland is because no research of the same context has been conducted on postgraduates due to enter the workforce in Ireland and postgraduate students are known for setting high standards based on their level of education with little

or no consideration to what workplace reality they intend to encounter. Also, the expansion in postgraduate education in Ireland is an area that has increased in last number of years leading to an increase in enrolment of 64,500 postgraduate student in the past years, while 21,584 postgraduate student was awarded a postgraduate certificate between 2017-2018 in Ireland, the expansion of more postgraduate education makes researching postgraduate student job expectations very important (Higher Education Authority 2018).

## **1.2 Research Question**

The main purpose of this study is to understand the job expectations of postgraduate students that are due to enter the workforce in Ireland. The objective was composed based on the quest for understanding what the postgraduate students expect as they enter the workforce and as the author herself is a postgraduate student. It is, therefore, crucial to understand their desired job expectations. From the main research question, 3 objectives were deduced and will be assessed throughout the course of study, which includes:

**Research Objective 1:** To develop an in-depth understanding into job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce

**Research Objective 2:** To analyze various job expectations that postgraduate students consider a priority when applying for a job position.

**Research Objective 3:** To determine if there is an alignment on postgraduate job expectation of the workforce.

### **1.3 Justification of the Research**

The motivation behind conducting this research in Ireland can be justified practically and empirically. Empirically, there has been no study of the same nature conducted on postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. Employer is always in need of new talent while attracting the best from the every-expanding pool, however (Morgan 2014, McCulloch and Thomas 2013) analysed the significant expansion and need for research on postgraduate education considering they fall under the skilled workforce as a poor recruitment or unmet expectation would not only affect the organization performance but also create financial damages to the organization. Morgan (2014) stressed the importance of postgraduate qualification needed for any graduate-level employment given the recent adjustment by the employer to economic changes while the lack of research internationally in this area to determine if there is a fit or gap in the area of postgraduate expectations could bring about a major mismatch. Consequently, exploring the segment of postgraduate students expectations j may be instructive and factual to employers.

Also, practical justification can be deduced from this study. Tomlinson (2008) believes that postgraduate have this increasing sense that there a degree is not enough and believe it is diminishing in value as a result of credential inflations. Also, the increase in the importance of postgraduate qualification is a standard prerequisite for some occupations. Eurostat (2012) emphasized the widening boost of higher education from an elite to a mass system which allows postgraduates who come from varied backgrounds, undergo their postgraduate education with different preconceived thoughts and expectation of their dream job not necessarily putting into consideration employers' expectations. Although, Green and Zhu (2010) expressed their concern on underemployment or overqualification of postgraduate student offering little chance for advancement due to a mismatch in expectation. In order to align and match existing employers' expectations with postgraduate students, there is an arguably need to redefine, understand and explore postgraduate students' expectations. The study will

also aim to highlight the areas that there are fit or divergent expectations while providing insight for postgraduate students in relation to providing caution while setting job expectations when preparing to enter the workforce.

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative framework through a semi-structured interview will be adopted as this allows for a more in-depth understanding of postgraduate students expectations which could not be used with a quantitative approach. For a clear understanding, Braun and Clarke thematic framework will be adopted in order to understand and identify the themes in a more objective manner.

## **1.4 Structure**

The purpose of this qualitative research investigates the main research question: “Job Expectations of Postgraduates Student due to enter the workforce in Ireland”. Who postgraduate students are, employment in Ireland and their employability expectations are the hypothetical structure for this study.

Chapter 2 construct the premise of this research. Subsequent to assessing the literature, the researcher outlined various theories on past research and the importance of postgraduate student concentrating on the job expectations they desired more which will ultimately help subsequent employers who intend to recruit postgraduate students, bridge the expectation gap within a business.

Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive data about the research, the selected participants and justification for the research method and design and including all ethical preventive measure observed. The chapter concluded with descriptive analyzes of the data instruments which included when and how the data was collected organized, transcribed and analyzed.

Chapter 4 analyzed the findings that were established from the interview using the thematic analysis in the collection of the data.

Chapter 5 analyzed and discussed the discovered themes which emanated from the findings. The chapter was concluded with various limitations which were identified during the research procedure.

Chapter 6 finally provided a summary of all the research findings, financial implication and a possible recommendation which may be of use to employers.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Literature was described by Quinlan *et al* (2015) as already conducted and published research of various writers and authors whose writing are obtainable in journals, media, article, podcast, peer-reviewed, conference reports, online and various non-governmental and governmental reports. As part of the study, it is crucial that the author must be able to fathom the perspectives of a vast number of past study and critically examine it in order to gain a comprehensive review of the groundwork and identify the gaps.

The aim of this research is to review current accessible literature relatively appropriate to the research objective of this study. By explicitly exploring and understanding who Postgraduate students are, the economy in which they will operate and their current job expectation, one can begin to comprehend why a conceptual discussion and findings should be analyzed on postgraduate students expectations. The study begins by outlining employment development in Ireland, the concept of Postgraduate students, who they are, after which employers expectations will be accessed and postgraduate expectations of future employer would be explored. Graduate expectations and postgraduate students employability will be discussed as they are sometimes labeled as unemployable and lastly expectation mismatch will be analyzed. The literature examined is taken from various peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, and website. However, peer-reviewed journals structure the premise of the study.

### 2.2 Employment Development in Ireland

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2013) analyzed that following the 2008 recession in Ireland, the employment rate declined within various organizations, work pressure increased which led to reorganization within companies and reduction of staffs which included a drastic cut of postgraduates intake as well as other job changes such as increased monitoring and responsibility and reduction in pay which was targeted at reducing and totally erasing the recruitment of postgraduates.



Due to the recession, postgraduates struggled to get jobs which made the market slant in favor of employers who were preferably recruiting experienced individuals who had knowledge and experience of the job which lead to a great deal of emigration of graduates at that time as it was evident that the economic situation had a great negative impact on postgraduates due to enter the workforce. Securing a job became the biggest challenge with less zeal and attention from employer to recruit from colleges and universities, which lead to stress and anxiety in postgraduates trying to secure a productive employment Russell and McGinnity (2013).

Although, CEDEFOP (2016) published a list of five sectors which included physicians, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths), nurses teachers and midwives who are experiencing a lack of qualified individuals for open positions across the European Union (EU) which has a significant impact on national economies. Despite the existing skill shortage in different industries, Ibec (2019) mentioned the demand for about 400,000 workers to fill the gaps for those leaving the workforce in 2020. Although the latest figure of 140,000 net jobs has been created in Ireland, increasing the level of employment by 8%, this is however not the endpoint, as policies are restructured and refined to focus on further reducing the rate of unemployment in Ireland Central Statistics Office (2017).

However, McMahon (2018), mentioned that the boost in Ireland's economy is creating positivity among employers as the numbers for graduate jobs are increasing and the hope for postgraduates seems promising given that the average starting salaries for graduates have been increased. Considering the changes in skills needs, and expectations of postgraduates, the employers' expectations remain relatively unchanged as employers continue to expect high level of proficiency from postgraduate students (Stephen 2015). Although Eurostat (2015) analyse that the demand for graduates skills and job supply in Ireland appears to be attaining a higher peak considering that postgraduate students who are between the age of 25 and 40 years have surged by about 19% of the total population in Ireland who consider themselves to exhibit relevant skills and competencies while been technologically advanced as a result of digital revolution, rapid demands and requirements of the real economy and diverse expectations of the

workplace forgetting that employers have their different expectations thus creating a gap in the workplace (Jusof, Simun, and Choy-Chong 2011). As such, Pacurar and Walker (2010) mentioned that if employers understood the job expectations of postgraduates, that might help future employers improve on attracting the appropriate talent needed by organizations to fill the STEM positions and avoid any mismatch or misplacement of job expectations.

### **2.3 Postgraduate Students-Who are they?**

According to The Higher Education Authority (2018), there has been a population bloom of 64,500 postgraduate students enrolment in the past year making it the largest annual increase since 2008 in Ireland. Higher Education Authority (2018) outlined the increment of students enrolling in both colleges and universities, mentioning that the present economy boost has called for a major enrolment for postgraduate studies for advancement in career and knowledge. Nasiri et al (2015) define a postgraduate student as an individual undertaking a program that requires completion of their bachelor's degree as an inclusion of the entry requirement and who is pursuing an additional advanced level of education in a specific field for a more advanced qualification and knowledge. Mello (2016) explained that a postgraduate program can be undertaken either full-time, part-time, E-learning or distance learning all which requires critical thinking and creativity as it involves individual rigor and intensive research which marks the completion of their long-term post-study engagement.

The Central statistics office (2018) estimated a breakdown of 11,619 males and 12,895 female course enrolment in 2018 for full time, part-time, distance and E-learning in all HEA funded intuition by various field of study, However, Postgrad.com (2019) stressed that majority of postgraduate students taking a master's degree takes 1-2years with a general perspective that an advancement in degree would provide higher chances for graduate job opportunity, help broaden their skill set, possibly pursue a career in academia or help them change their career direction, although career options for postgraduate entry remains to be validated to what extent its effect would have on their long term prospect of job advancement and progression amongst their many other expectations. Theoretical research indicates that the Irish government invests over 782

million annually on Higher Education Institution (HEIs) around Ireland in tackling skills shortages as supply co-exists with rising demand for stem professionals Postgrad.com (2019). It is no surprise that Ireland economy has attracted a lot of international students as postgraduate enrolment is taking a higher peak particularly from international students from outside the EU who undertake the full-time program as a result of Irish visa favoritism Higher Education Authority (2018)

Given the number of postgraduate due to enter the workforce Kirton (2014) stressed the influence of postgraduate taught education to the economy in relation to development of analytical, specialized and critical thinking way of problem-solving and its huge significance to the postgraduate in terms of higher chances of employment, increased income and strengthening their skills set. McMahan (2014) argue that despite the inconsistency in the way postgraduates are perceived and accessed, Managing director of Hays Ireland Mike McDonagh mentioned that the current economy is the appropriate time for postgraduates entering the labor sector as employer interim of hiring postgraduate is high and with the economy continuing to grow, employer will be caught up in a war for the getting the best talent on board, and this could be avoided by understanding the expectation of postgraduate students which could come as a huge significant difference to the organization in defining an easy transition into the workforce.

## **2.4 Employer Expectations**

CIPD (2005) stated the importance of professional standard in every organization which included employer recruiting or hiring individual portraying skills, knowledge, attitudes, expertise and behaviors that their future employer would easily adapt to. The pre-eminence on the development of employability skills within (HEIs) is now a firmly established policy between government, employers and educational providers. However, Department for Business Innovation & Skills (2016) highlights the importance of employability skills as a major contributor to business competitiveness and growth within an organization as workplace expectations of both employers and postgraduates seem to be the primary factors contributing to gaps in talent sourcing.

Even as organizations source for the required talent the war for talent still continues, winning today's talent requires an organization to adopt a start to finish strategy to sourcing for the right talent to work. It is a mentality that shifts organization headhunting for the brightest and the best to invest for the long term. Armstrong and Taylor (2017) posit that majority of organizations are confronted with challenges while sourcing for postgraduates whose expectations, knowledge, skills, value and competencies align with organizations' needs and expectations considering the constant change and increasingly competitive market. Felfe *et al* (2008) stressed that employers believe that with the right education and qualification, postgraduate students are expected to be more knowledgeable and empowered with the appropriate soft-skills and attributes considered as the most valuable to sustaining a professional career. Treleaven and Voola (2008) pointed out that different employers seek different soft skills on competencies, attributes, job specification and roles depending on the kind and nature of the organization, although several efforts have been made to understand employer expectation in specific fields but it still remains not well understood as expectations of the workplace varies based on the work sector (Tesohe and Rica 2012)

Amen (2014) critiqued that skills presented by post-graduates to their prospective employer on beginning their career most of which contradicts skills employer expect from postgraduates, McGuire (2018) mentions that the underlying reason for seeking experienced potential employees is to ensure that the postgraduates are work-ready and possess the required work skills to improve performance. Although Jusof, Simun, and Choy-Chong (2011) mentioned that digital revolution and the fact that there is no restriction on set of skills stated in job advertisement have indeed changed postgraduates expectations, who rarely consider the general needs of employers, that believe that an average graduate should possess and demonstrate skills applicable and relevant to the job requirement and specification. Although the findings were focused on specific skills that graduate needed for graduates to navigate effectively, no research seems to emphasis on postgraduate especially in Ireland.

Despite the noticeable influx of graduates joining the workforce market annually with employers seeking to recruit the best (Amen 2014) stressed, the disappointments among

employers who documented that various expectations in regard to skills competencies and knowledge of postgraduates appear to be on the lower side as various studies have confirmed differences in the perception between employers and postgraduates on quality of graduate employability skills (Jackson, 2016, Muyako and Seedwell 2015). Amen (2014) added that new recruits are not only evaluated in regard to their educational performance, but also their behavioral, technical, and various non-cognitive skills that they take as priority as the business world seems to be strategizing based on the current market situation given the increased competitions requires ongoing changes demand and innovative strategies in order to acquire the competencies and skills required for the organization.. The absence of graduate essential skills and competencies lead to innovation of “The New Skills for New Jobs” by (European Commission 2016) with the sole objective of projecting the changes in practical skills, experience and knowledge needed to harmonize expectation and narrow the gap between the world of work and education. Clearly, all assessment on the matter of importance to employer is based on their judgment of employability skills to work and perform with no consideration to postgraduate job expectations of the workplace.

McGuire (2018) argued that postgraduates are expected to realize and understand that their employability capability increases as the economy develops and the entrance of new companies sourcing for different skills may to a great extent affect the expectation of employers. CIPD (2017) contrast the implicit assumption that employers believe that postgraduates are expected to enter into the competitive workplace with already developed skill, and knowledge ready for manifestation as this can be corrected by defining employability terms and necessary skills that are of resonance to the employer and postgraduate students. Sundberg et al. (2011) highlight the disagreement between the expectations of postgraduates entering the workforce and employers, recommending that new employers in workplaces should consider reviewing different adaptive skills to ensure they are enough to create a mindset that ensures developmental forecasting of the industries and motivates postgraduate students to work together in teams as this would help acquire the capacity to evaluate the real employability skills and ensure that they do not only stick to the specified responsibilities but equally consider ensuring pro-

activeness in taking initiatives in focusing on the value congruence between organizations and postgraduates Mullich (2018).

## **2.5 Postgraduate Students Job Expectations**

The Irish university association (IUA, 2018) pointed out the increment in postgraduate education as a key contributor to enhancing Ireland innovation across all economic with particular focus on gaining employment outside academia and fill up the STEM jobs while bridging the expectation mismatch. In the context of postgraduate employment, Lyons et al (2015) analyzed the relationship between the educational environment and working conditions, as it attempts to understand the affordance and constraint of postgraduate expectation of the labor market as awareness of employment condition seem to be constantly changing with the economic.

Although literature varies with respect to postgraduate expectations towards the workforce, several studies were mentioned but yet to be conducted in Ireland. General research have been shown that they appreciate flexibility and work-life balance more (KPMG, 2017; Twenge et al., 2010). Another study by McGuire (2018) mentioned graduate expectancy from the employer were pay and condition of wellbeing, workplace culture, flexibility and onboarding. A survey conducted by Tubey, Kurgat and Kipkemboi (2015) in Kenya on postgraduate expectations of the workplace categorized their expectations on zeal for growth opportunities, work-life balance, work holiday, training and welfare service while the survey conducted by Mamatha (2013) in Bangalore suggested that postgraduates have high expectation of the workforce from both current and futuristic point of view. Maxwell and Broadridge (2014) oppose that the increase in postgraduate formidable force around the world has brought about the growing complexity particularly in the process of understanding the various workplace expectations which makes understanding postgraduate job expectations in Ireland very important.

GradIreland survey (2014) found that 60% of postgraduate student in Ireland have realistic pay Amen (2014) notes that new recruits are not only evaluated in regard to their educational performance, but also there behavioural, technical, and various non-

cognitive skills that they take as priority, although, (Soilemetzidis, Bennett and Leman 2014, Stuart et al., 2008) stressed that postgraduate degree are undertaken for reasons like career progression, and a way of gaining competitive advantage in the labor market. However, Sundberg *et al.* (2011) emphasized the disagreement between the expectations of potential employers and postgraduate students due to enter the workforce as no consideration are targeted at aligning the expectation of postgraduates. Bates and Raye (2014) suggested that such high expectations are expected considering most postgraduate students are paying their tuition fee. Muyako et al (2015) contrast by stating the concern of employer on how profitable postgraduate addition could be to the organization considering the changing character of postgraduate students, their inconsistency and complexity of the workforce. Despite the inconsistency, if postgraduate students expectations are accounted for and understood this could help in having an easy transition into the workplace.

In addition, Resto, Ybarra and Sethi (2007) outline the battle companies have faced in sourcing for appropriate talent. Mullich (2018) contrasted the effort and resources put in by organization in sourcing for the right skills, stating the processes of recruiting and onboarding them without proper attention leaving the new recruits feeling adrift due to shift in employers focusing on the next set of recruit they are bringing on board, as the overall process was not only about attracting the talent but not focusing on their expectations. McMahon (2018) argue the need for prospective employers to better understand postgraduates expectations due to enter the workforce as they are very discerning and in prime position to snap up jobs needed to sustain their growth and expectations to work. GradIreland (2019) contends that various top organizations like Coca-Cola, PWC, Deloitte, Bank of Ireland amongst others are adopting new worldly approaches to recruiting talent as they are seen attending various career fairs across Ireland soliciting for talent, hosting presentations to address the various expectations of potential candidates and shorten the skills gaps

## **2.6 Graduate Expectations**

According to a research by (Murphy, and Gawthorpe (2013) and Treuren, and Anderson (2010), the job expectations for graduates vary for individuals and discipline although similarities exist in areas that include training, earnings, medical insurance, flexibility

work-life balance, and career progression. Murphy et al (2013) posit that graduates are keen on their salaries although, for starters, employers have little to offer above the minimum wage. McGuire (2019) indicates that salary remuneration is a critical aspect that graduates expect from their employer as almost all past research concludes that graduate expectation starts from having to choose their first organization to work based on career prospects, remuneration package, flexibility, autonomy and growth opportunities which were top of the list. Messum, Wilkes, Peter and Jackson (2017) research on employability skills analyzed that 77% graduate compared to employers, expect their future employer to provide additional training to help graduate acclimate to the high standard expected compared to 57% of employers that provide on-the-job training.

McGuire (2018) specifies that both pay and job conditions are issues that set the graduates' expectations. According to CIPD (2017), a significant percentage of UK graduates do not secure well-paying positions within the first 6 months after graduation. The report, shows that one third of the graduates receive salaries below £20,000, which is lower than the national median gross annual salary average of £28,300 with about 78 per cent of fresh graduates earning less than £30,000, not to mention that a standard organization in Ireland would offer a level 9 graduate a salary of €24-28,000 depending on the job specification. Although Armstrong and Taylor (2007) mentioned that pay expectations among graduates tend to vary with what employers offer fresh graduates, differences could be present among postgraduate students as the qualifications tend to be slightly higher than those of undergraduates. However, McGuire (2018) stressed that the pay employers offer to postgraduates does not align to their qualifications thus affecting productivity. McGuire (2018) recommends that postgraduates seeking employment should consider asking questions related to compensation primarily in relation to performance-associated pay and bonuses.

Major organization realizing the significance of employee expectations are focusing on easing their application processes to benefit graduates. For instance, organizations like Deloitte are targeting the utilization of procedures that make applications less complex in favor of graduates. According to McGuire (2019), an organization like Deloitte opted



to revise its application process after realizing a decline in the numbers of graduate applications. The author notes that the decline could have been attributed to the increased time that the organization required to respond thus creating delays that turn graduates off.

As such, the company considered reviewing their hiring process to develop a streamlined and faster strategy that favors both potential graduate and employers while evaluating the credibility of their skills in specific roles. Various organization are trying to bridge the gap in graduate expectation because they do have an idea which makes understanding postgraduate expectation very crucial as it help organizations understand what they should expect from the new postgraduate due to enter the workforce

## **2.7 Postgraduate Students Employability**

Employability being a major complex and angular factor has recently been revealed in EU countries to be failing as employability is mainly determined by the job market rather than their individual expectations and skills (Greenbank, 2012). The notion of skill and employability has attracted not only employers but also scholars and policymakers at various levels of the government whose beliefs lie in strengthening the skills policy and meeting the skills shortage in various sector to reduce the unemployment rate while ensuring the national competitiveness of Ireland (Wilton, 2011). The connection between employability and education has become a more tenuous concept which leads (Vanhercke et al., 2014) to defining employability as the capability of an individual to secure or gain employment in a job which the graduate consider satisfying and manage to retain it in accordance to its interest and beliefs.

In the context of employability and ensuring that postgraduates students are job-prepared and a major objective for postgraduate completion of their studies, Minocha Hristov and Reynolds (2017) analyzed postgraduates employability to employment through various academic, lens of policy and practices applicable to HEIs. However, Goldacre Lambert and Linden (2015) pointed out in their survey that 40% of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce expressed their fright and concern in entering the workforce particularly in relation to dealing with difficult situations and the

ambiguity of practical skills and competencies expected from them by employers. Baruch and Rousseau (2018) emphasized that various factors that shape the term employability, although postgraduates consider it a major determinant in enhancing their opportunities for employment and securing a career. Mooney (2018) posit that although the employability rates within Ireland appear to be relatively positive, it is imperative to investigate the job expectations of the most highly educated members of society (postgraduate students) such that they provide the workforce with advancing knowledge and innovation that will sustain the national productivity and global competitiveness during the peak period in the economy. Minocha et al (2017) mentioned that most postgraduate students are now taking greater employability enhancement strategies like furthering their education in order to get advance knowledge and skills which can in turn help to gain employment in today competitive market. Baruch and Rousseau (2018) contend that the major challenge is no longer the struggle for limited supply of professional jobs as there are available jobs in the STEM Sector with limited individuals to fill the position which clearly indicates that a solid positioning on understanding postgraduate students expectations is needed.

Mooney (2018) states that even as the economy of both the EU and Ireland become stronger and the employment prospects for postgraduates surge, higher education institutions might face challenges in convincing the public that postgraduate level programs could contribute to enhancing both the employability and salary opportunities for students if there is no clear understanding on the expectations of postgraduate students. Mooney (2018) added that although the employability rates within Ireland appear to be relatively positive, it is imperative to investigate the job expectation of one of the most highly educated members of society (postgraduate students) in order to get an easy transition into the workforce while understanding what their expectations are which comes as an advantage to the organization such that they provide the workforce with advancing knowledge and innovation that will sustain the national productivity and global competitiveness during the peak period in the economy.

## **2.8 Expectation Mismatch.**

Even as the Irish economy stabilizes and there has been a reasonable improvement on unemployment, employers still focus on the hiring of best talents and managing their retention to increase and maintain both the productivity and competitiveness of organizations. However, in addressing the changing expectation of the workplace, multiple surveys of employer reveal a serious inconsistency in the work preparation, skills, knowledge, and expectation of postgraduate student which appears to be a major contributor to the limited awareness on the expectations of postgraduates student and participation in bridging the gap. Evidently, there exists a gap in employability skill and other various job expectations as refer to earlier are factors that result from variances of postgraduates and employers expectations towards one another. GradIreland survey (2013) reported that 64% of graduate employer stated that their biggest challenge was finding applicants with the right skills.

The difference in expectations was analyzed by (Mcquire 2018) who mentioned the difference in job expectations between employer and postgraduate students. Amen (2014) posit that another area of mismatch which could pose as a greater challenge is employability balance between postgraduates and employer as the mentality that postgraduates are employment ready for the workforce with no consideration to lack of workplace experiences. However postgraduate believe that organization are expected to provide them with intensive training and development in understanding the workplace. Although, scholars stressed that the economic recession that affected the nation about a decade ago reduced the employability rates of postgraduates thus changing their perspectives in relation to seeking higher education. The importance of future employers understanding postgraduate job expectation would help facilitate the effective flow of postgraduate employment.

Lastly, all discussed research addressed the relevance of establishing a need to explore the job expectations of postgraduate students, considering the economy is consistently changing so should companies in preparation for the unpredictable future as this is vital for the success of every business in understanding the continuous human traits and expectations, and the ever-changing postgraduate students expectations.

## **2.9 Aim of research**

The aim of this research is to explore the various job expectation of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. From the literature review, Postgrad.com (2019) posits postgraduate student as anyone embarking on a postgraduate course who has fully completed his undergraduate degree and require postgraduate qualification for advancement in knowledge and career plans. McGuire. (2019) point out that most postgraduate students believe furthering their education would guarantee them a head start in the workforce, but they seem to ignore the fact that employers also have already set expectations. The research question will, therefore, enlighten employer on the fit or divergent job expectation of postgraduate and the need for those expectations to be considered and align it with the expectation of employer in order to sustain and survive the competitive workplace.

The objective was formulated based on the quest for understanding what the postgraduate students expect as they enter the workforce and as the author herself is a postgraduate student. Therefore, it is crucial to an in-depth understanding of their desired job expectations. From the main research question, 3 objective was deduced and will be assessed throughout the course of study, they are as follows:

**Research Objective 1:** to develop an in-depth understanding into job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce

From the extensive literature review, different perspective was discovered of postgraduate student. Some researcher illustrates their overzealous and unrealistic expectations of postgraduates who cover 19% of Ireland's population. Aina (2018) argued that despite the inconsistency in the way postgraduates are perceived and accessed, Chief Executive Kevin Green associated with recruitment and employment confederation mentioned that the current economy is the best time for graduate entering the labor market as employer interim of hiring young student is high and the best way of getting the right talent onboard is when their expectations are accounted and understood which could come as a huge significant difference to the organization in the sustainability and profitability of graduate addition.

**Research Objective 2:** To analyze various job expectations that postgraduate students consider a priority when applying for a job position.

Even though the job expectations vary from individual to individual, certain similarities exist in areas such as Pay, culture medical insurance, flexibility work-life balance, and career progression. A study by Murphy et al (2013), posit graduates are keen on their salaries although starters must manage a little above the minimum wage that the employers are ready to offer to them. McGuire (2019) however specifies that both the pay and the job conditions are the major factors that influence the graduate expectations. The need for clarity on those various job expectations priority may help deduce the unspoken and demanding expectations whilst providing cautions in relations to setting job expectations when preparing to enter the workforce.

**Research Objective 3:** To determine if there is an alignment on postgraduate job expectation of the workforce.

Stuart and Lyons (2008) posits that the rapid increase of postgraduate in Ireland and their formidable force around the world has brought about the growing complexity of the global workforce particularly in the process of understanding postgraduate various expectations as job expectations differ from employer to individual, however, determining the fit or divergent views would help understand the various expectations and also shorten and bridge the skill gaps that might exist.

## Chapter 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The justification of this chapter is to outline the main research pattern and methodology that will be adopted in the cause of this study. In order to ascertain the research objective, reference will be made to the “Research Onion” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012). The research onion tends to render direction in depicting the issues, approaches and decision on the choice of data collection. The justification for choosing the method adopted for the study, the data collection technique and other issues will be well discussed and justified.

### 3.2 The Research Onion

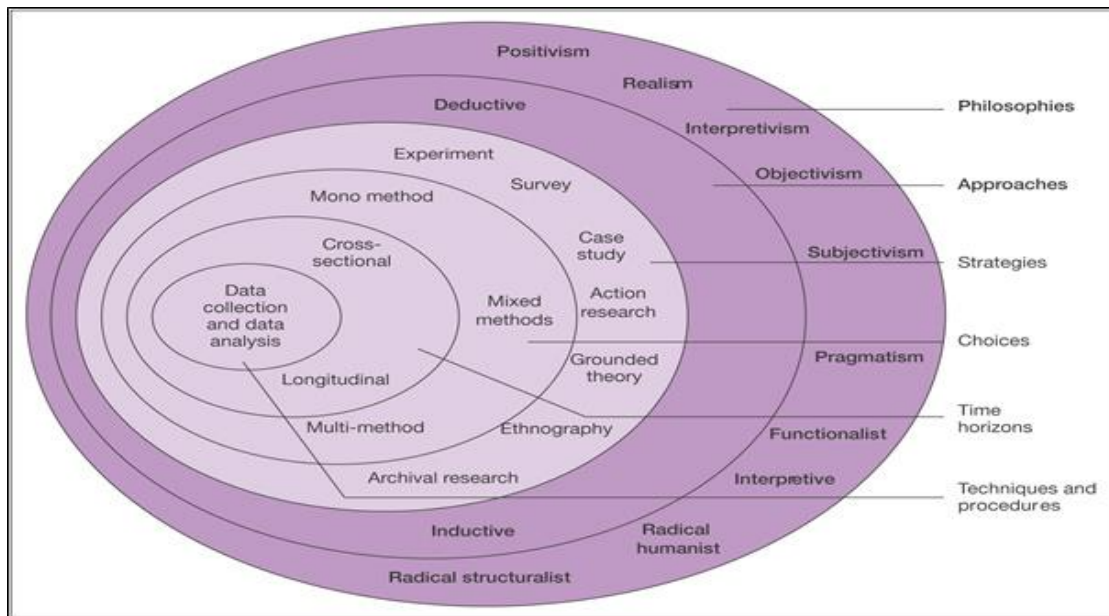


Figure 1. Research Onion Source: (Saunders et al, 2011)

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) explained the research onion by analyzing the layers that must be covered when developing a research strategy. It was also mentioned

that it gives a better understanding of the methodology used by the researcher for the study and the effective progression of designing the methodology.

### **3.3 The importance of research?**

Research is the process undertaken by an individual with the intention of “finding out things” in a specific area in a “systematic way” while increasing their knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012). Although collection of information and data is known as part of a research process, if not undertaken with a clear purpose which may include understanding, analysing, describing, explaining, and criticising and in a systematic way which is based on logical relationships and not just beliefs it will not be seen as research (Saunders et al., 2012). The author analyzed three characteristics associated with conducting a research: First the data has to be collected in a systematic method which implies that the interview will be conducted in an orderly, standardized and formal way, secondly, the data has to be transcribed and interpreted systematically and lastly there is clarity of purpose to the research in finding things out and identifying the multiplicity associated with the possible purpose of the research (Saunders et al., 2012). He added that a clear understanding of the characteristics will help in choosing the appropriate research strategy, analysis technique and data collection.

### **3.4 Aim of Research**

The comprehensive aim of the research is to investigate and understand the job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. McMahon, (2014) added that in order to align existing employer expectation with postgraduate students, the need to redefine and explore postgraduate expectations is crucial to understanding postgraduates desired job expectations. Based on the overall aim of this research, 3 objectives were established.

#### **Research Objectives**

1. To develop an in-depth understanding into job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce.
2. To analyze various job expectations that postgraduate student considers a priority when applying for a job position.

3. To determine if there is an alignment on postgraduate job expectation of the workforce.

### **3.5 Research Design**

Research design refers to the comprehensive technique chosen in collecting, answering and analyzing your research questions and objective. The significance of clarifying the research question cannot be exaggerated as it contains how you propose to collect and analyze the data and a clear objective deduced from your research. A semi-structured interview was employed to create relevant data for this study as against utilizing a structured interview. A structured interview is commonly associated with quantitative method when undertaking survey research in which data comparison is made between subgroups and survey groups. The choices of answers are often fixed, minimizing the impact of context effect, restricting the scope with no possibility of altering the question with very little rapport, while the quality and usefulness of the information will be dependent on the quality of the question.

The main reason for adopting a semi-structured interview was to generate purposeful questions and conversation with the intention of gathering appropriate and valid qualitative data that are relevant to the research objective and questions on the topic which seeks to explore the job expectation of postgraduate students. It allows the participant gives some sort of schedule even though the schedule is not fixed which allows them to discuss at their own merit or dive into point the researcher has not thought about giving the researcher an avenue to obtain rich, true, new meaning and knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012). The semi-structured interview focused on a total of 15 students which was used to derive the database of the study each providing answers to the key questions already structured by the interviewer.

### **3.6 Study Area**

The study adopts qualitative research. The study will be focusing mainly on postgraduate students from three different colleges. The population is drawn from



postgraduate students from National College of Ireland (NCI), the second populations were Dublin Business School (DBS) and Trinity College. The study will focus basically on individuals between the age group of twenty-five (25) years and forty (40) years.

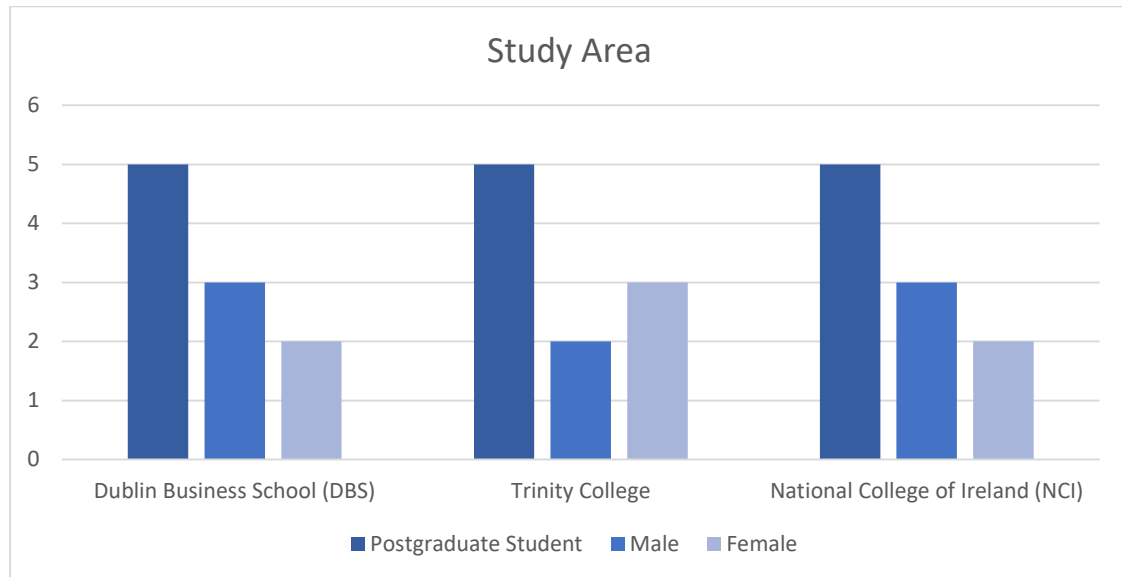


Figure 2. Postgraduate students' classification by college

### 3.7 Research Methods

There are six research methods according to the research onion, but they can be generalized into two namely: Quantitative and Qualitative research methods by Saunders et al (2016).

Quantitative research is a systematic investigation explaining phenomena using a mathematical base method of gathering quantifiable data. All data are usually collected and commutated for statistical analysis while quantitative research methods involve the use of facts and patterns of a given population from a numeric data (Teherani *et al* 2015). The data collection is usually used to quantify behavior, attitude, and opinions while the result is generated from a larger sample of the population (Saunders et al 2016). However, Qualitative research methods is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. It provides in-depth information about human behavior and answers questions about how and why people act and behave in the way they do. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main data collector in which observation and attitude are

noted in line with questions asked for the research. The researcher examines why events occur, what happened and what those events mean to the participants. (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, and Varpio, 2015). Qualitative research methods are research techniques that are usually conducted using interviews and focus group. They can also be inductive and subjective or constructive and or interpretive (Quinlan et al., 2015).

After carefully analyzing both research method Qualitative research method will be adopted for this study as the study is dealing with a small number of people (15), and help provide insight information while uncovering trends in opinion thought and deeper understanding of the study as data are reported in the participant language. It also helps the study in gathering data through participant interviews and observation while understanding the participant perspective which tends to help the research objective in deriving the necessary themes. For the purpose of understanding qualitative analysis thematic analysis (TA) will essentially be adopted in analyzing and linking patterns in qualitative data. Thematic analysis been suited and works with an unlimited range of research questions. It helps in understanding people experience, construction and representation of a particular phenomenon, analyzing different type of data from interview to focus group while working with a small data sets (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) analyzed six (6) phases of thematic analysis mentioning that the researcher cannot proceed to the next phase without completing the prior phase which helps the researcher in keeping track of every step of the study. The six (6) phases are stated below:

1. Familiarization with the data: It is a known form of qualitative data where the researcher is familiar with their data by continuous listening to audio-recorded data and re-reading and analyzing the data while noting analytic observations.
2. Coding: It encompasses the semantic and conceptual reading and extracts of important teams of the data collected in concernment to the research question.
3. Searching for themes: It involves searching for themes and researcher constructing relevant themes in line with the research question.
4. Reviewing themes: It involves the researcher noting the themes if it reflects and whether the themes can build up a convincing argument.

5. Defining and naming the themes: It involves the researcher identifying and analyzing the essence of each theme while establishing an informative and concise name for each theme.
6. Writing up: It involves putting together the data extracted and analytic narrative in telling the reader about the contextualizing relationship that prevail to the existing literature.

Adopting a thematic analysis for this research will assist the researcher in developing an absorption of the value and assumption of the study and the subjective positioning of the participants (Braun and Clarke 2006).

### **3.8 Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy as mentioned by (Saunders et al 2016) refers to the beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge and its unwittingly way we go about conducting the research. It simply refers to the step taken by researcher is doing when conducting a research in developing more knowledge in a specific field. The author added that three major research process dominates the research: positivism realism and interpretivism as the play a major role in management and business research. it is however imperative that before exploring the different research philosophies it is crucial to acquaint oneself with the three types of research assumptions to distinguish between the research philosophies. Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology. Saunders et al (2016) explain the following terms as:

#### **Ontology**

Ontology refers to the “assumptions about the nature of reality”. It is emphasized that ontological assumption shapes the way the researcher view and studies the research project (Saunders et al 2016, pp.127). Ontology is also used in tackling challenging question to connect models and theories. Ontology can be analyzed by materialism which implies that reality exists irrespective of the human observer, while it can also be viewed from an idealist perspective, that belief the human mind is more real and has the

reality constructed in the observer mind. However, ontology is said to describe what exists within a specified field and the relationship between them which specifically is not considering the true essence of the reality. Considering that ontology study focuses on studies like nature of reality, time and causation, it is generated automatically from a large dataset and cannot be considered suitable for this research which focuses majorly on postgraduate job expectations as the research is not forming a theory but relating themes generated back to previous studies

### **Epistemology**

This is “focused on the assumptions made in relations to what constituted as an acceptable “knowledge”, what constitutes the validity, acceptability and legitimacy of knowledge and how this knowledge can be passed on others (Saunders et al 2016, pp.127).It is also of the belief that knowledge is historically and socially constructed while objectively accessing the external world which implies that the researcher must be able to rationalize the claim, which must be true and the participants must believe in it. For the researcher to justify a claim it must be done using good quality logical and reasonable evidence. Epistemology also has a significant impact on the importance of discussing the possibilities and limitations of reporting and creating knowledge related to the research as the philosophy adopted must be suitable for the study and allowing participants who have different views make claims on their specific understanding and knowledge of the truth in relations to a particular research

### **Axiology**

This “refers to the role of ethics and value” within the research. It incorporates questions about how we deal with both our values and the values of the researcher and participants during the study process (Saunders et al 2016, pp.128). Axiology is also the philosophical study of different type of value which analyses the nature of things like beauty, social philosophy and ethics which involves defending the moral behavior in human and recommending concept on right and wrong conduct.

### **Positivism**

Gill and Johnson (2010) refer to the philosophical instance of positivism adopted by natural scientist as the collection of data about an observable search and reality with the objective of creating a law-like generalization. With positivism research collection of data are neutral and remains detached from the study which may bring about using of existing theory in the development of hypotheses. Another important component of the positivism research is that research is undertaken in a value-free way as the researcher remains neutral and detached from the study as both the participants and researcher have no influence with each other in the process of data collection and altering of the substance of data collected. Saunders et al (2016) however critique that positivist research is more suited for a quantitative study

### **Interpretivism**

Interpretivism was analyzed by (Saunders et al, 2012) as been derived from phenomenology and symbolic interactionism which refers the reality and beliefs on the way humans view or make sense the world around their beliefs. Interpretivism is more flexible and subjective and information gathered are socially structured as they tend to gain meaningful details of the situation and motivating actions rather than being determined by hypothesis. Also, interpretivism research enlightens t the researcher in interpreting and understanding the phenomena while heightening judgment made and awareness of value in drawing a conclusion. It also helps in clarity on your value disposition when making appropriate decision ethically rather than predicting the causes of defending your beliefs in the event of queries (Saunders et al 2012). Interpretivist approach will be adopted for this research as it allows the participant to make sense of their words on what they believe is their job expectations while the researcher makes sense of the participant's words.

### **3.9 Research Approach**

There are two main types of research approaches namely deductive approach and inductive approach as illustrated in the research onions

#### **Deductive Approach**

Deductive approach is the development of a testable proposition about the pre-existing theories and the relationship between various variables to form a theory. This approach is expected to investigate and deduce the testable proposition using existing literature to analyze the consistency of the selected phenomena derived from previous research Saunders et al (2012). However, (Blaikie, 2010) mentioned that a deductive approach basically analyses the causal relationship between concepts and variables, this approach is best applicable to quantitative research and would not be suitable for this study.

### **Inductive Approach**

In contrast to deductive approach, Inductive approach allows the researcher to have a deep understanding and clarity of the nature of the problem as specific data collected from the interview helps develop a possible theme while establishing different views on phenomena (Saunders et al 2016). Research using inductive are more particular about the context in which the event is taking place. Therefore, study with a smaller number of participants might be more suitable as data collected are analyzed to explore and identify patterns themes and phenomenon while adopting a suitable conceptual framework. Saunders et al (2016)

This study posits to understand the job expectation of post-graduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. Hence, an inductive approach best fits the research as data will be gathered and then formed into theory. The information used for this study were gathered through the primary and secondary sources as it establishes patterns, and this enables the researcher to achieve the aims and objectives of the study.

The research has an exploratory element as the topic implies and it focuses on the expectation of various individual that form the population for the study. The exploratory research design was chosen because we observed and analyzed the various behaviors and mannerism of the participant rather than finding a solution to existing problems. An explorative design allows the researcher focus on examining the experiences and thoughts of (various individuals) post-graduate students in Ireland. Creating an inductive inference to generate untested conclusion make it more suitable for this study. For the purpose of this research an inductive approach will be used, allow the participants identify their own themes instead of using a closed approach or deductive

approach of mapping a theory as a semi-structured interview adopted will always follow an inductive approach.

### **3.10 Methodological Justification**

In contrast to deductive approach, which is aimed at testing already known theory, an inductive approach is concerned with the creation and generation of new theory emerging from the data collected for the research. After proper consideration of both methodologies and in order to explore the job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland, a narrative and qualitative research design were chosen as it best fit the nature of the study, reflecting (Lyons and Kuron's 2014). A narrative approach to the findings is adopted summarizing the discussion and using direct quotations of the participants selected from the student feedback. With this approach, it recognizes the need to make sense of the open interest of those who took part in the research. The purpose of the study is to comprehend the job expectations of postgraduate students, the use of qualitative approach will help gain in-depth knowledge into the expectations of postgraduate students, giving the participant the avenue to express and voice out the opinions themselves without restriction (Saunders et al 2016)

### **Time Horizon**

Saunders et al (2012), emphasized the importance of time horizon as it is needed for analyzing the research design irrespective of the methodology adopted. Longitudinal and Cross-sectional are the two-time horizon, although longitudinal are repeated over a specific time frame. However, since this research has a specific time frame, the cross-sectional time horizon is used.

### **3.11 Data Collection Method**

One of the most crucial criteria of data collection and the suitability of any data is the measurement of the overall validity and reliability of the study (Saunders et al.,2012). However, some organization and researcher have argued that the validity and reliability are often inaccurate and inconsistent with quantitative methodology due to the positivism.

Although qualitative researchers are more focused on the validity, reliability, generalisability, credibility and any forms of bias of their research, the research interview is focused on understanding the relationship between the “What” and “How” variables are emphasizing on exploring the “Why”. The essence of qualitative research is to seek new insight while creating truthful, genuine and credible research (Quinlan *et al* 2015)

Marshall and Rossman (2006) posit that the reliability associated to a semi-structured interview relates to the findings the degree as to the repetition of the research while reflecting the time they were collected and the consistency in the result. This contrast with reliability associated with a quantitative study (Reed, 2005).

In establishing the validity and reliability of the research, Saunders et al (2016) recommend qualitative research as it helps gather reliable, valid data and relevant data related to your research objectives and questions while giving you an opportunity to probe answer in order to get the interviewees to elaborate and more on their response, giving you the opportunity of getting a rich and detailed data.

### **Secondary Data**

The secondary data utilized for this study was gathered from peer-reviewed journal articles and online articles. The literature review in line with many books and journals helped develop an in-depth understanding of all the previous research conducted in line with the secondary data.

### **Primary Data**

The primary data for this study was collected from first-hand sources. The author chooses to use a semi-structured interview as it best fits what the research tends to achieve.



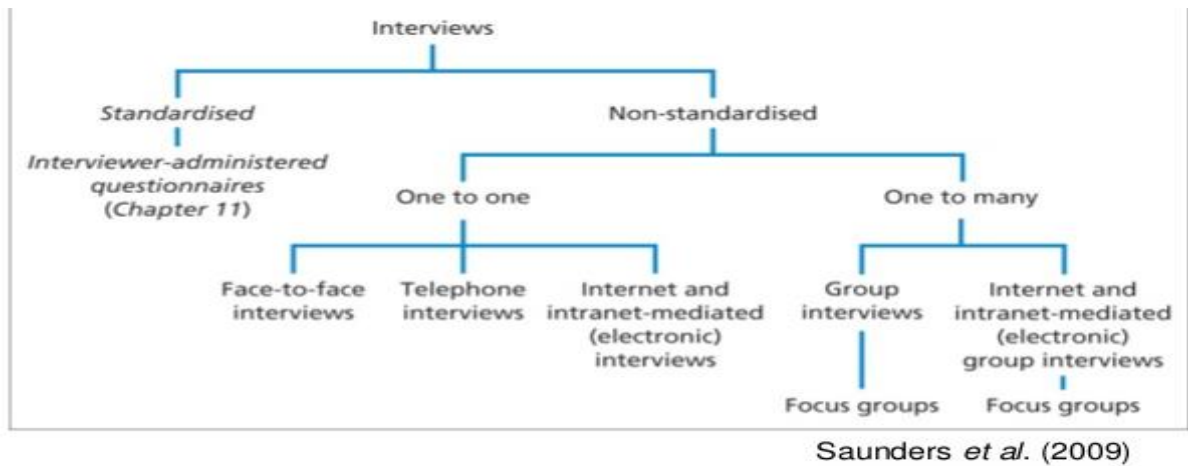


Figure 3: Primary Data Source (Saunders *et al.*, 2009)

In addition, because the research is not to form a theory but see if the themes could be related back to the previous study, secondary data would not be appropriate while primary data is best suited to achieve the objective the research set to achieve.

### 3.12 Data Collection Procedure

Conducting a purposeful conversation between two or more individuals requires an established rapport where questions are asked for an intended purpose. This interview will further generate relevant data for the study. The process of conducting an interview allows the researcher to build a connection with the participants. Conducting interviews equally creates an avenue to probe the participant's responses while having an in-depth understanding of the topic under study and observing the interviewees in identifying real expression and peach of voice when asked specific questions. (Saunders et al 2012). Regardless of the richness of data embedded in one-to-one interviews, it is also time-consuming, therefore it is crucial to be time cautious when conducting and administering the research (Quinlan et al., 2015).

For this purpose of this research, 15 semi-structured interviews were utilized. All the interviewees are between the ages of twenty-five (25) years and forty (40) years., thus all participant fit into a cohort of postgraduate students. The semi-structured interview

schedule was enlightened by the main research topic. Based on authorization by the participant to record the interviews, each interview was audio-recorded using the “Voice Recorder” app on a mobile phone. All recording was later transcribed in full-text format into an analysis file on a laptop. There were 7 questions and each interview lasted between 20-35minutes and majority of the interviews took place in took place in the school premises. Prior to the interview, all participant was provided with an information sheet via email, and a consent form to inspect and sign before the commencement of the interview.

### **3.13 Ethical considerations**

Ethics are be described as the standard guild of behaviour of the author when conducting research. It is mandatory that qualitative research follows an ethics procedure (Saunders et al.,2012) One must be acquainted with of the ethical considerations from the start point of selecting a topic to the various research questions that would be used. It is of crucial importance that the participant is informed about the research and should free willingly consent to take part in the study (Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005). Mason (2006) suggested that the researcher ensured complete anonymity and confidentiality of any information given by the participants.

For the justification of this research, the researcher contacted each participant via phone and email explaining what the topic is all about and why the research is been conducted. To get the attention of the participant the number of questions and amount of time allocated to the interview was explained. Time and place were decided by the participants to suit their convenience. The consent form was provided to them on the day of the interview providing information on data protection risk and confidentiality (Rowley, 2012). In line with this study, all necessary ethics was fulfilled.

# Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings that emanated from the semi-structured interview conducted will be presented. The framework for analyzing the data was the Braun and Clarke thematic analysis which was adopted in answering the research questions.

## 4.2 Aim of Research

The overall aim of the research is to explore the job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. The HEA (2018) who identified that there has been a population growth in enrolment of postgraduate students who are categorized as high human power needed in every booming country like Ireland further their education with a mindset of meeting their expected job expectation amongst intention of getting higher chances at employment increased income and strengthen skills (McMahon, 2014) added that in order align existing employer expectation with postgraduate students, the need to redefine and explore postgraduate expectations is crucial to understanding their desired job expectations. Established on the overall aim of this research, 3 objectives were stated.

### Research Objectives

- 1.To develop an in-depth understanding into job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce
- 2.To analyze various job expectations that postgraduate student considers a priority when applying for a job position

3.To determine if there is an alignment on postgraduate job expectation of the workforce.

#### **4.3 Data Analysis**

The study used Braun and Clarke thematic analysis to aid the analysis of the information derived from the participant. An Interpretative framework was adopted for this study as it helps analyze the participants view on the topic and helps the researcher in restoring those key elements into a framework that makes sense (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2006). Joffe (2011) described thematic analysis as an essential method used in the social sciences for analyzing and distinguishing patterns in qualitative data. He added that Braun and Clarke thematic analysis can be used for a large or small range of research question in analyzing different data to produce data or theory-driven analyses. In addition, flexible approach to thematic analysis helps in the interpretation of data gathered for this research and that will be discussed below. It also enables qualitative studies to be systematically analyzed to form a coherent understanding of the evidence base in the research.

All interviews conducted was analyzed and was resembled into various categories in a qualitative table for better understanding. 15 postgraduate students were interviewed and recorded. The coded categories captured both conceptual and semantic reading of the relevant data while examining their relationships with one another in order to ensure that relevant extracted patterns and themes were identified in the data.

There were several similarities and view amongst several participants concerning specified questions. Although the participants were a mix of international and Irish student, they both had several similar viewpoints on some of the questions

#### **4.4 Interview Findings**

The overview of the Braun and Clarke thematic analysis was analyzed in the methodology section. The analysis of the findings suggested that there are 5 solid job expectations of postgraduate students who are due to enter the workforce in Ireland. Majority of participants considered the six themes to be their general job expectations they seek from any organization they intend to join as they enter the workforce. This themes also helps in having a clear understanding of the research question which was developing an in-depth understanding into the job expectations of postgraduate students.

The 6 job expectations include;

- 1. Increased Pay and Incentive**
- 2. Training and Development**
- 3. Career Progression**
- 4. Job Flexibility**
- 5. Job Security and Stability**

## Objective 1:

### Major Common Job Expectations

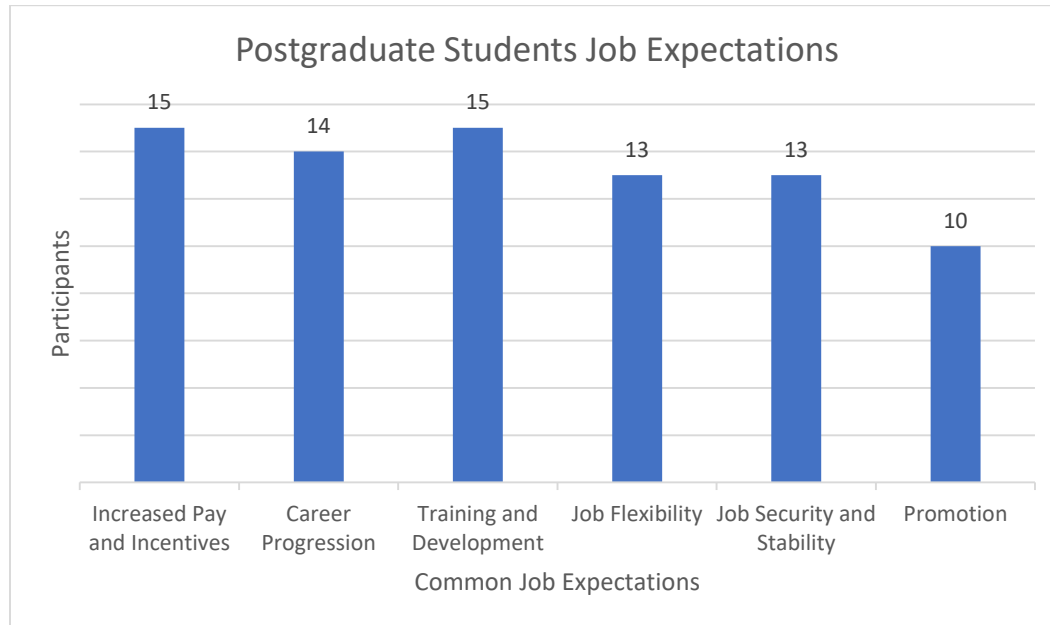


Figure 4: Postgraduate Students Job Expectations (Interview analysis)

**Figure 4 Bar chart illustrates the frequency of themes across participants.**

#### Theme 1: Pay and Incentives

As can be seen in figure 4, we could see the responses amongst the various respondents involved in the interview. All participants emphasized the importance of increased Pay and incentives as a significant factor for them pursuing their postgraduate degree. They all felt that pursuing a postgraduate degree would be a significant value to them getting better pay and rewarding incentives (i.e. holiday pay, free health care and maternity pay). Many participants discussed the importance of having a reasonable pay which comes as some form of financial security while other participants talked about incentive relative to the job role.

“Pay and Incentive for me is very important, apart from Ireland been an expensive place to live in, and the fact that I have a postgraduate degree I expect that gives me an upper edge and higher pay compared to those having and undergraduate degree in addition to several incentives that might also serve as an attraction.” (P2)

“Pay is crucial and a large number of us postgraduates will put that as our number one job expectation and a major reason for pursuing a postgraduate degree.” (P15)

Overall, for postgraduate students pay and incentives were significant factors of their expectations for their future job expectations.

## **Theme 2: Training and Development**

All participants illustrated the significance of training and development as a criterion for undertaking their postgraduate degree. Emphasizes was made on Ireland rapidly involving and employer notion on training and development of today’s workforce is changing. They believed that most organization invest in training and development of competent individuals like postgraduates who already have known knowledge of the job, which comes at a lesser cost to the organization while other participants believed that postgraduate degree exposes them advanced level of knowledge and skills, which could make employer more likely focus their attention on improving on their advanced knowledge by allocating more technical responsibilities knowing they would be trained and constantly developed which tends to create an avenue to be promoted and move up the ladder of their career.

“Training and development are very key from a postgraduate perspective in the sense that my level of education creates an avenue to experience different types of training, which is beneficial to both the organization and I, while given the avenue to develop myself within a company”. (P10)

### **Theme 3: Career Progression.**

Career progression was of keen interest to majority of participants. Participants mentioned how career development was one of the major reasons for undergoing a postgraduate degree and also a major expectation in their decision to work for an organization. Participants believed that their postgraduate degree does not only increase their chances in progressing in their career but also give them an upper edge within an organization. Other expressed how getting an added knowledge in their field of study will stand them out amongst their peer than those who may have less training or specialized postgraduate knowledge as getting a postgraduate degree opened doors of opportunities.

“ I further my education because I hope for higher chances for career progression within the organization I will be joining as I do not want to be stuck to a particular position for 1-2years, and again I feel that having an advanced knowledge and skills tends to give a chance at progressing faster and attaining the height of my career”” (P6)

“My postgraduate degree will not only increase my chances at career progression but will also open other opportunities, considering my advance knowledge in my field of study” (P1)



Although majority of participants were of the opinion that a postgraduate degree would strengthen their career, they is a realization on their expectation that they are not going to get instantly prompted within the workplace as can be seen from participant (P9) who suggested that he sees career progression evolving in a gradual space.

“I would not consider career progression as a job expectation just yet, because I do believe it is a gradual process that has to be built upon and basically, I just need to get my foot in the door first and understand the world of work.” (P9)

#### **Theme 4: Flexibility**

Flexibility within an organization was a particular point discussed by many participants. Some participant believed that employers consider postgraduate student more flexible because they believe we have advanced knowledge and exposure of responding to workload, change, and ambiguity within the organization. Participant also considered flexibility as a key to a successful work-life balance while creating the options of days and time to work from home without supervision.

“ I realised that taking a postgraduate degree will strengthen the confident that an employer as in me to respond to unanticipated changes while been able to adapt to the workload presented to me knowing that I will deliver while giving the choice of having to choose my start/finish times to work knowing my capacity to work and deliver without no supervision” (P1)

“Flexibility is the new trend and that can only be in place when employer have confidence in your capability as a postgraduate student compared to an undergraduate” (P3)

## **Theme 5: Job security and Stability**

Majority of participants highlighted the importance of job security and stability as a consideration for embarking on a postgraduate degree. They expect that having a postgraduate degree will not only help them in securing a stable job but will increase their job search for permanent positions over a contract and temporary positions. Other participants stressed that while doing a postgraduate degree they were hoping that their training and development will be increased making them more knowledgeable and as a result their chances of job retention and being wanted within an organization will be of significance.

“The major advantage I believe of having a postgraduate degree is that it creates job stability and security in the sense that I get to secure a job I desire by bargaining my term and condition of employment. I am not saying a graduate with bachelor certificate cannot bargaining his or her terms and condition of employment, I just believe that more preference will be given to me as postgraduate because i hold a higher qualification” (P7)

Some participants also mentioned promotion as a major reason for pursuing a postgraduate degree. Promotion was analyzed by participants as an important job expectation as they believe it was a necessity that comes along with taking a job knowing that they have one of the highest qualifications. They believe that having a postgraduate degree should increase their chances of promotion.

“If I haven’t gotten a degree, I probably would not have been promoted but having this degree would be favorable to me getting promoted at work” (P-15)

“Promotion is an important reason for pursuing my postgraduate education because it is very important that I continue to grow in my desired line of career and for that to happen I have to continuously be promoted based on my zeal and dedication to the job” (P8)

“Pursuing a postgraduate degree increases my chance of been promoted at work knowing that I have the degree and knowledge to possibly be considered whenever the organization are considering candidates” (P14)

## **Findings**

It was identified that postgraduate student had similar views on job expectation they consider priority when considering job roles as those job expectation preferences were a major determinate to their job choices. Although several themes considered as a major job expectation was mentioned again as a priority (i.e. pay and incentives, career development and progression and training and development) A number of clear viewpoint was deduced from participants on what they expect when they are applying for a job which includes:

- 1. Increased Pay and Incentives**
- 2. Work-Life Balance and Flexibility**
- 3. Career Development and Progression**
- 4. Training and Development**
- 5. Job Retention**
- 6. Job Security and Stability**

## Objective 2:

### Prioritized Job Expectations when applying for a job role.

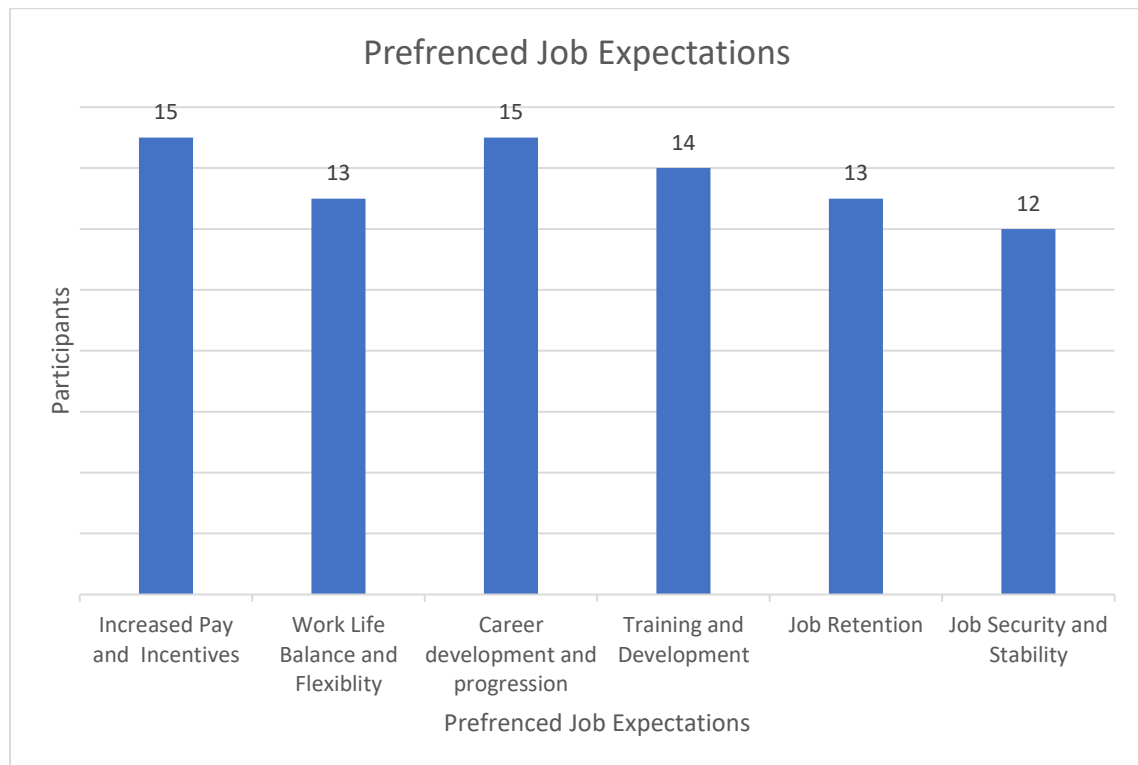


Figure 5: Priority Job Expectations (Interview analysis)

**Figure 5 Bar chart illustrates the frequency of themes across participants.**

#### Theme 1: Pay and Incentive

In addition, to pay and incentive been discussed earlier, the secondary aim of thesis was to examine the job expectations postgraduate students consider priority when applying for a job role and again pay and incentive was an important factor. It is clear from the research that all the participants complete a postgraduate degree with the intention of

getting an increase in pay and consider it a major priority when considering job choices.

As can be seen by participant 13 who highlighted that

“Pay and incentives is important for me, such that it also help restrict my search on the company I am applying for” (P13)

“Considering this is my first job, the starting salary and other benefit are critical to my job search” (P5)

“Pay and incentive is so important because having a postgraduate degree was not easy and it was a major determinant for me because I know it increases my chances at better pay than an average graduate “(P2)

## **Theme 2: Work-life balance and Flexibility**

Work-life balance and Flexibility was another job expectation that was considered priority by majority of the participants. Participants had similar thoughts on the importance of having a balance between there career and personal life while given the avenue to choose when to work.

“The mentality of work is now changing compared to the old ways, I personally consider flexibility at work. Having no restriction of where and how to work amongst deciding your working time is key when taking on a job role in order to be able to balance work and my personal life” (P11)

“Several organizations in Ireland have an attractive offer but leave out flexibility and work-life balance. Having done this postgraduate has helped enlighten me on how powerful my degree will be and how well I can use it effectively to achieve the perfect work-life balance I desire and flexibility at work” (P13)

“My career line is very rigid but still I want to work when I am most creative and productive and not have a feeling of my life-time pursuits been affected” (P9)

### **Theme 3: Career Progression**

In addition, Career development and progression was again mentioned as a priority expectation by all participant who had a similar view on being responsible for their career growth, strengthen their skills and believes that every organization has to create an avenue for their employee to grow within and outside the organization.

“Career development and progression is an on-going process as the changing economy demands developed and continued skills. Career progression is priority for me because it open opportunities of new career possibilities while helping to build my status” (P2)

“Career progression is vital criteria for a happy carer and the major reason for perusing a postgraduate course. I am particular about knowing the company reputation and if there are great learning opportunities for me to develop my skills” (P12)

### **Theme 4: Training and Development**

Training and Development were identified again by many participants as a major job expectation priority. They identified the importance of training and development practice as it set to meet the demand of the present generation and also improve their effectiveness as an individual. They emphasized on the rapid change in Ireland economy and the constant need for innovative training and development in building the necessary

skills, knowledge and capabilities needed to manage challenges and issues while improving on themselves. They also emphasized how training and development can be used by an employer in gaining competitive advantage and attracting the best talent.

“The appropriate training and development in my field would not have been gotten on the job alone but through advancement in education although it also increases your chances for more knowledge which is why I would consider it a priority when making decisions on my career” (P6)

“I will consider a job role that incorporates training and development scheme knowing that there is always room for continuous learning and improvement while creating an avenue for my growth, improved performance and increased salary” (P12)

### **Theme 5: Job Retention**

Many participants highlighted job retention as a major priority while considering a job choice emphasizing the importance of applying to an organization that has a track record of retaining their employees. Participants stressed the importance of an organization having a track record of retention of staff as it helps erase the sense of uncertainty when taking up a job role. They also suggested that considering the low rate of unemployment and their advancement in education, it is important for organizations to be able to attract postgraduate by offering a more attractive and engaging work environment and culture while putting in place competitive benefits in retaining postgraduates.

“Retaining top talent is a crucial issue in most organization, having a postgraduate degree, I would expect that I would be retained within the organization if there is any need for downsizing of any sort” (P4)



“As a postgraduate student I will only take up a job role in an organization whose culture does not give room for career advancement and growth and empower employee because if those are not in place it will definitely increase turnover”  
(P11)

### **Theme 6: Job Security and Stability**

Lastly, some participants also mentioned job security and stability as a major job expectation they would consider priority when considering job choices. They mentioned how job security and stability tends to affect their financial situation and also their personal life. Participants believe that a high level of job security plays a vital role in reducing their chances of been unemployed while attracting and retaining the best candidates.

“Considering the fact that I will be a new intake and workplace is changing faster than anyone could possibly realize I would consider a company that I know I can bargain my term and conditions and have a track record for stability and security within the company” (P5)

“The level of the job and the offer made tells what kind of commitment the organization will have towards my development and growth in the company and how well they will be willing to retain me by training me possibly and putting plans in place that will enhance my future endeavor as well as create a sense of stability for me” (P13)

### **Objective 3**

#### **Alignment on postgraduate job expectation of the workforce.**

All participants felt that for specific job roles they should have a certain pay considering their advancement in education and economic situation of Ireland as this is an alignment with employers who believe they should be rewarded.

“I believe that there is an alignment as organizations are keeping up with the pace of improving on terms and conditions of pay and employment because I believe that they know that pay is one of the criteria they can use in sourcing for the right talent” (P4)

Majority of participant agreed that there is an alignment of their job expectation on training and development, career progression and work-life balance and flexibility. **Participant** believed that organizations should have in place opportunities for career progression, while continuously embedding training and development as having the right culture within the organization which reduces stress, increases productivity, attract postgraduate and increases flexibility.

“All my stated expectation should definitely align with job expectation of the workforce because organization are improving and changing as the economy is and if organization are going to be recruiting postgraduate students, they should definitely look into our job expectation as it is critical to us been productive” (P15)

“Organization should definitely be position on meeting the job expectations of staff as they would want to bridge any expectation gaps in order to have a happy and satisfied staff within the working environment” (P9)

As seen from the data the participants believe that their specific job expectations are aligned with the workplace expectation as they consider those expectation a major criterion for their pursuing a postgraduate degree.

#### **4.5 Limitation of the research.**

The research has a few limitations. Although the sample size was quite small, Braun and Clarke framework thematic analysis was adopted in getting and analyzing the data.

Secondly, the themes generated were consistent themes that came up across those enrolled in business courses, as no indication shows that their expectation will be aligned with expectations from other course of study.

Lastly, it is also essential to point out that majority of the participants had no work experience or had not undergone an internship role and all the themes mentioned were based on their reason for pursuing a postgraduate degree while a mix of experienced and non- experience postgraduate student could generate more remarkable results.

## **Chapter 5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the findings as described in chapter 4 while equating the findings to existing literature review to identify the various job expectations of postgraduate students and if there is an alignment view on job expectations. The primary objectives of this research explore the job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. The main research questions set out to broadly identify the job expectations of postgraduate students. To review and analyse the research question stated above, 3 objectives were established which would simultaneously give an in-depth knowledge into the mindset of postgraduate students.

The overall findings suggested similar common themes which define the job expectations of postgraduate students and the job expectations they consider priority when applying for job. However, the theme was reviewed by the researcher and categorized down into 5 primary themes. The 5 themes were critically analysed and selected as those where the major themes postgraduate considered most important and emphasized more on as their most crucial job expectations. Also, the selected themes were significantly important to understand the research question and objective the study is trying to answer. The 5 themes which will be discussed include;

**1.Increased Pay and Incentives**

**2.Training and Development**

**3.Career Development and Progression**

**4. Job Security and Stability**

**5. Work-Life Balance and Flexibility.**

## **Theme 1: Pay and Incentives**

Pay and incentives was discussed a lot during the semi-structured interview with regard to the aims of this thesis which was gaining an in-depth understanding into the job expectations of postgraduate students and the various job expectations postgraduates consider priority when considering career choices. As discussed in Chapter 2 the GradIreland survey (2014) found that 60% of student in Ireland generally do have a realistic pay expectation noting that an average graduate earns between 26,000-30,000 euros depending on the industry although engineering and IT sector are said to be the highest-paid sector, however the current study and findings suggest that postgraduate student expect higher pay than their graduate counterpart as this is one of the major reason for undertaking their postgraduate degree. Organization for Economy Co-operation and Development OECD (2015) argued that although Ireland is known for its strength of labor market with supply of skilled labor increasing rapidly, Ireland is known for having one of the highest incidences of low pay amongst all OECD countries. As can be seen from the data analysis, majority of participants indicated that pay and incentive was a significant factor of their job expectations as Sridevi (2010) stressed the importance of pay and monetary incentives in motivating an individual. Olubusayo (2016) added that an individual is motivated to have the right attitude to work and ultimately will be productive if what will encourage them is in the workplace.

The Hays Ireland salary and recruitment report (2018) published that postgraduate high expectations regarding pay, work-life balance and training and development as it was established that student appreciates the link between pay and level of education as decisions made on choices of career are determined on a number of factors put into consideration. When discussing the job expectations, they considered priority. Participants emphasized on pay and incentive been a major priority mentioning that their decision on career choice depends majorly on how attractive and reasonable the pay is. Chiang (2015) stressed the importance of work in individual life as their decision

on a future job can be determined by their field but often the aspect of pay plays an important role. Sara, Barry, and Kathleen (2014) stressed the substantial importance of pay and incentive which is a major determinant in choice of jobs that an individual decides on which leads to a higher effort on finding a job of choice. Although to the researcher knowledge there is no data on the difference in pay rate for postgraduate, however a report on payscale in United Kingdom (UK) analyses an average salary between £22,000-45,000 depending on your career major and substantial experience while the payscale (2017) in the United State of America (US) states that a postgraduate salary could range between \$41,200- 84,000 depending on the career chosen as a postgraduate degree translate to higher lifetime earning which varies greatly to bachelor's degree. Although the salary expectations of postgraduate is between 26-30,000, it would be clear that a postgraduate will expect more but they are still realistic in their pay progression.

In analyzing the third objective which was to determine if there is an alignment between employers and postgraduate students job expectations of the workforce. Although research has predominantly focused on employer and graduate expectations in Ireland, however, it is unclear and there is research lacking in understanding if there is an alignment on pay and incentives structure. From the employer angle, it could be clearly specified to postgraduate at the point of recruiting their wages entitlement in order to manage the reality versus their expectations although the implication of such an idea is that organization may be restricted on the number of postgraduates they might be recruiting. Also, from a postgraduate angle, they have to be more realistic on their pay expectation such that having a postgraduate degree does not mean they will get 80% increment in salary compared to an undergraduate, while their medical and holiday trip will be expensed paid because they have a postgraduate degree.

## **Theme 2: Training and Development (T&D)**

One of the aims of this thesis was to examine the job expectation of postgraduate students and training and development was another key theme that emerged. Majority of participants believed that their postgraduate education did provide them with the

training and development needed to get specific jobs although they expect to get specialized training and development in order to improve on their skills, knowledge and meet up with standard in order to remain productive. In chapter 2 it was described that postgraduates are seen to further their education with strategic job expectations who seek more than just a job role but a holistic development. However, in fulfilling the gap between current postgraduate's job expectations, Elnaga and Imran (2013) emphasized that postgraduate's expectations on training and development are more strongly related ability to have an upper edge, ability to cope and perceived organizational support. Although training and development was a major influencer to postgraduate students pursuing a postgraduate degree, they also consider it an indispensable theme that also influences their decision on career choices.

Postgraduate believes that getting added knowledge, skills and postgraduate qualification is a start as getting specialized training and development will lead them to a better job. This statement was supported by Jehanzeh and Bashir (2013) who suggested that individual crave a need to improve on their skills in order to be self-reliance and have the capability to perform while understanding the impact on their career choice. Participants also stressed the importance of wanting to naturally advance by getting the necessary training, gaining the required skills to remain valuable to the organization and individual self. Noe, Clarke, and Klan (2014) mentioned the importance of T&D which not only enhance individual capabilities but a valuable organization function for improving both organization and graduate effectiveness as leaps are exponential and gaps in employee development may become impossible to recover if not put into consideration.

One other aim of the thesis was to determine if there were fit or divergent view on postgraduate job expectations. Training and development was described as an important job expectation. Although Kraimer, Seiber, Wayne, Liden, and Bravo (2011) suggested that in the past many employers did not invest in training due to cost and GradIreland specifying that 37% of employer invest in on-the training and development, however, due to recent development in technology and economy upturn which has created more job opportunities, employers are recognizing the need for training and development in the workplace. The implication could be analyzed from the employer and postgraduate

point of view. Firstly what can colleges do to make postgraduate have a realistic approach of the workforce and what training they should expect and secondly how well can employer focus on preparing postgraduate for a lifetime employability which will be of advantage to both the company and postgraduate at no extra cost as (Lorette 2016) posit that training and development has expanded to where today it is viewed to enhance both individual capabilities and giving an organization a competitive edge. One major consideration for an organization should be that they emphasize on the kind of program they use to improve productivity and performance and not consider the cost associated with the training.

It is clear that both postgraduate and employer consider training and development necessity and of advantage to both postgraduate and the organization as every organization has become a learning organization as the benefit from the postgraduate angle is acquiring new advanced skills and knowledge which tends to be of great advantage to the organization

### **Theme 3: Career Progression Opportunities**

Career progression was considered as high priority by all participants when discussing their various job expectations and the expectations they considered priority when applying for a job. Postgraduates believe that their added knowledge and degree exposes them to greater responsibility, enhances their prospect of advancement in skills, competencies and specialized field which could enhance their advancement quickly in the line of work while standing them out amongst the crowd at an accelerating rate. Although postgraduates expect that employer should focus more on providing necessary guidance, support, resources and tools to develop on their skills and abilities, Bates and Kaye (2014) emphasized that such high expectations on career progression are arguably understandable considering the fact that a reasonable amount of postgraduate student is paying their tuition fees as mentioned in chapter 2 and are specifically undergoing their postgraduate to advance and enhance their prospect.

Considering their desire for new learning opportunities, their tenaciousness and ambition in achieving what they are passionate about which was a major consideration



for pursuing their postgraduate education as discussed in chapter 2. When asked what their major expectations were, they consider priority when applying for a job role, each participant mentioned career progression as a motivating factor in assisting their decision on a job emphasizing on the increased opportunities for advancement that their postgraduate degree was going to create while sending out a positive message to the employer about how serious they are about their progression within their field. Kong, Wang, and Fu, (2015) supported the statement by mentioning the importance of career opportunities in every organization which come as an advantage to both the organization and the postgraduate students. It was emphasized by participants that their decision-making process was based on individual orientation to learn given the positive relationship between career progression and several aspects of an individual work lives as suggested by (Shrophire and Kadlec, 2012), Noe et al (2006) added that career progression tends to affect individual career change and act as an incentive for the individual to learn and perform better. As postgraduate mentioned that career progression was one of their major job expectations that motivated them to want to complete their postgraduate degree. Steel, Allen and Bryan (2005) suggested that organization who adopt this practice while creating internal opportunities have a higher chance of attracting, motivated and qualified postgraduate as they know there is a chance for development and progression within the company. It could also help in aligning postgraduate expectations with organizations goals and objective which could come as an advantage at increasing retention, decreasing turnover and retaining key talent, although the implication could be spending more time on managing talent while establishing a fair consistent and administrable promotion and progression policies which could help postgraduate make a smooth transition while strengthening their career and skills expectations for future opportunities. Lastly, future research could focus on strategies that could be incorporated in providing more job enhancement and enlargement in elevating postgraduate development and progression plans which

#### **Theme 4: Work-Life Balance and Flexibility**

Work-life balance and flexibility were important job expectation priorities. The themes were discussed extensively by majority of participants when understanding their various

expectations postgraduate considered priority when applying for a job position. Postgraduate students enter the workforce with transformative thought about integrating personal and professional life. They expect to have a balance by keeping a reasonable cap of the amount of time spent working and how flexible it is in merge it with their private life. Glover and Butler (2011) supported the statement by emphasizing on the demand for appropriate flexibility at the workplace which has become a necessity for every individual to reduce work-related stress irrespective of the sector of work. Although Nam (2014) suggested that work-life balance and flexibility is based on individual perception of linking work and private life in such a way that one does not affect the other. Postgraduate students are of the thought that having a postgraduate degree reduces their chance of been subjected to unpredictable work contract, exacerbating future of uncertainty with little bargaining power in dealing and negotiating their workplace conditions.

When determining if there was a fit or divergent job expectation of the workforce. Participants mentioned that they are of the belief that today's employer would consider work-life balance and flexibility as practices they must incorporate to attract the right talent whilst avoiding work stress and turnover. It is of the belief of participant that the Irish labor market attracts international employers and organization which leave a lot to desire amongst addressing the relationship between the personal life and work which tends to affect organization's outcome. Although several types of research emphasis on the necessity of work-life balance and flexibility, there is a need for further research on this theme from postgraduates job expectation perspective. In addition to postgraduates expecting to have the desired flexibility and work-life balance that meet their personal obligation and life responsibilities its has some implication on employee not having a clear declination between home and work such that the flexibility as work could be taken advantage of in partaking in other activities while from the employer point of might not know when to draw the line in order not the bridge the flexibility embedded which could result in lack of communication and presence of postgraduate.

Based on past literature that stressed that organization who offer work-life balance and flexibility tend to attract a wide range of talented postgraduate, more research can be directed to finding out the best type of work-life balance initiatives that can be adapted

to suit recruiting talented postgraduates while being of great advantage to the organization.

### **Theme 5: Job Security and Stability**

Job security and stability was a well-discussed theme by the participant. This concept was discussed during analyzing the job expectations they consider priority when considering job choices. Although there was limited information on postgraduate student and job security and stability, Participant emphasized that in order to increase their chances at a stable and secure job they decided to pursue their postgraduate degree. However, postgraduate student agreed that with everything they would have to offer they expect to have job security. Parker and Bevan (2011) posit that job security and stability has a major influence on individual commitment and retention as it is a vital key attribute of a good job. The participants were of different opinion on job security and stability being a key expectation to deciding on their career choice. Participants emphasized that the labor market is changing dramatically while new communication technology, globalization, and advanced education are intensifying secular trend of the labor market which brings about numerous changes to the organization. Although participants are of the belief that the type of employment and career line determine and affect individual perception of job security. They emphasized on considering a job role that assures a comfortable and stable salary amongst getting a permanent role that secures and settles their private needs.

Although Deloitte study (2011) found out that individuals between the age of 26-35years are quite concerned about job security and stability, however, Davidsco and Sly (2014) mentioned that it is expected as the need for job security tends to increase with an increased enrolment in education as this study analyses that participants believe that their postgraduate education and knowledge will serve as a selling point for employers to retain them. Participant expects that job security is one of the social rights that have to be guaranteed since it is impossible to ignore the interest of the employee and the economic environment within which they subsist. The implication drawn from this finding is that postgraduates have analyzed and carefully make their research before

applying for a job role in order to have a clear understanding of the organization strength and weakness when it comes to security and stability while employer needs to specify the advantage associated with recruiting postgraduate by guaranteeing them for the maximum years of job security and stability.

However from the literature and finding there is a need for more research on the job security and stability been a job expectation postgraduate consider when making career choices as there has been no research indicating that organization sees the need for postgraduate to be reassured that security and stability will be in place when taking on a job.

## **5.2 Limitations of the research**

It is crucial to emphasise on the limitations of this research and recommends area that could be examined further for future research.

1. Despite significant growth in recent years, research has mainly focused on graduate and employer, however, not much discussion has been done on postgraduate expectations. This study is a positives step in understanding this section of society who pass significant amount to both the workforce and higher education. Several types of research have predominately focused on employer and postgraduate expectations; however, it is unclear and there is research lacking on understanding the job expectations of postgraduate students in Ireland as data was limited and an obstacle in comparison of data
2. All the five job expectations discussed was based on the time frame and the 15 participants involved. There could be a need to use a large sample in deriving more job expectations from postgraduate students.
3. All participants used were full-time postgraduate student from three colleges who were from the management sector but did not compare job expectation of different sectors of the economy. It might be interesting in the future to look at part-time postgraduate or a blend of both part-time and full-time as part-time postgraduate student might have different job expectations considering they do have work experience

However, there were also various strengths associated with this research which is important to be noted;

**Strength of the research.**

1. A Braun and Clarke thematic framework was used to generate the themes for this study and the first study to look at postgraduate students.
2. This is the first research looking at the current postgraduate students' expectations live in action who are the point of entering the workforce in Ireland.
3. It was a semi-structured interview that allowed participants to discuss what they wanted and was not quantified or allowed for a holistic approach. A semi-structured interview was far more superior to a quantitative analysis that would not give us a thorough understanding of the study.
4. This study was the first to focus on the job expectations of those undergoing a postgraduate degree in management areas.
5. An inductive approach was adopted for this study, as the researcher went in blind

In conclusion from this study, it is clear that pay and incentives are important to postgraduate students, such that they expect to get a job that creates an avenue for career progression and that is not equal to the one of a graduate student because they expect that their training and development will be far more superior to make them competitive and have them retained within the company by having security and retention.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to explore an in-depth understanding into the job expectations of postgraduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland. This research presented several themes on postgraduate students expectations and those they consider priority when applying for a job role.

The data collated from the semi-structured interview revealed 5 key themes which include Increased pay and incentives, training and development, career development and progression, job security and stability and work-life balance and flexibility. The findings initially displayed 12 themes but after critically analyzing all the themes, the 5 listed expectations were the most considered and consistent themes.

A qualitative method was selected for this research as it justified the nature of the research and also helps in deducing rich themes unlike quantitative approach, the researcher was able to uncover trends in participants opinion, thoughts without restriction and deep understanding of the phenomena while allowing themes to emerge from the data. Unlike a quantitative method which would not allow the researcher to gather such informative data to achieve and answer all the 3 objectives. Also, the qualitative approach adopted allowed for data collected from participant contains words in describing their reflections (Rudestam and Newton 2015)

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The findings generated for the purpose of this study allows clear in-depth knowledge of what postgraduate students expectations are and what they expect from their future prospective employer. These insights will enable organizations and employer to understand their driving force to further their education and what motivates postgraduate students. The research will also help employers understand postgraduates due to enter the workforce which could help in an easy transition into the workplace

One of the strengths of this study is the researcher explored the job expectation of those undertaking a postgraduate degree in the management area. From the findings it would suggest that to management organizations, that they should preference in their job description the incentive or a kind of baseline pay that they provide, and they should be a kind of discussion and understanding between higher education and business about what an employee with a postgraduate degree is worth in terms of getting them unto the job and retaining them. However, the cost implication is that it is going to be expensive for the employer because if they have more staff with postgraduate degree their pay and incentives are going to be a lot higher.

Organizations should make career progression more transparent in companies that having a postgraduate degree is going to increase your likelihood such that employee with postgraduate degree should expect to have better pay, better job title as supposed to just a graduate student.

From the angle of managing the expectation of postgraduate students. The idea of pay should be more realistic and made available to postgraduates such that they have a realistic idea of what their pay range would be and just because they have a postgraduate degree does not mean they would get 90% increase or their medical and holiday allowance will be fully paid for or they getting that continuous job promotion

From this study findings it was deduced that student expect training and development will secure them a higher chance at getting a better job while been a prime opportunity for both postgraduate and organization that make the time and cost a worthwhile investment which can lead to career progression of individual at no added cost to the organization but increased productivity, quality standard, enhance company profile and reputation. The financial implication is it saves time and cost by having in house training which keeps individuals aware of new business practices and technology development whilst following the economy trend which comes at no extra cost to the organization. If all this recommendation is considered job security and work-life balance tend to blend in.

As can be seen in the study it is clear that postgraduate student expects better pay, given their expertise training and knowledge, they expect better career opportunities, better working condition and as a result they expect to have security and retention in the workforce. Also, employer could also outline the pay, reward and incentives that they will provide to a postgraduate.

Judging from the literature and participants views employer care more about experience and skills than theories and knowledge. Employers might want to look into creating an internship avenue at which postgraduate students are allowed to get the real business world experience and skills which come as a training opportunity for postgraduates. This would come at no extra cost to the organization but instead have increased manpower and a high tendency of retaining the best talent at no extra cost.

Lastly, organizations could introduce new work-life balance and flexibility regulations which could be of great benefit to both postgraduate and organization in terms of increased productivity, and retention of talented employee with no cost implication to the organization but rather increase employee potentials and benefit.

The enrolment of postgraduate students within Ireland have increased tremendously within recent years and postgraduate student have provenly to be extremely important to the Ireland workforce. The lack of literature available shows that postgraduate students expectations have not been given the necessary consideration. Although the result of the research indicates that postgraduate have various job expectation, further



research with a much larger sample size in other colleges should be taken into consideration. All recommendation made below has been suggested following the data collected and analyzed.

### **6.3 Implications of Findings**

The financial application associated with this study would be very moderate. Organizations would have to focus more on career progression through investing in training and development of postgraduate students which tends to cement their other work expectations while motivating them by introducing job flexibility, incentives, new opportunities and challenges while allowing postgraduate to get the most out of their career. Furthermore, it will reduce the gap expectation, turnover rate and increase productivity within organizations.

One of the implications to the findings of this study would be employers understanding the job expectations of postgraduate students which will help the organization create an enabling environment that will helps foster a sense of belonging, mutual respect and relationship amongst employer and postgraduate students.

Organizations could consider partnering with higher education's institutions in implementing supervised work experience as an approach to ensuring that there is a balance between skills expected and postgraduate desired expectations.

Postgraduate students always want a fit between their lifestyle and work-life balance which is also part of their job expectations. It is necessary for employer to understand such expectation which will create a happy employee and in turn lead to a more productive environment.

### **6.4 Personal Learning Statement**

The completion of this thesis is a partial fulfillment of the MAHRM course. Upon starting the course, I have learnt a significant amount of transferable skills which I will

want to bring to my workforce as a potential Human resource manager. I am able to interview participant, I am able to understand and sensitize the issue, problems or ideas that I come across, I am able to comprehensive use concept and compare previous work with in-depth knowledge of having to critically apply theory and concept and implement plans while following a logical manner. This research helped me in understanding the importance of research, time management, planning and implementation, and also gained in-depth knowledge and skills needed to successfully excel in my Human Resource (HR) career.

Although the thesis proved to be the most demanding aspect of the Master's program, I had the autonomy of choosing a topic of interest to me, creating a self-directed learning process upon completion and learned a great deal on my chosen topic which could be brought on board with me to any organization I pursue my career. Being a career-driven individual, I found it interesting to explore the job expectations of postgraduate students as I myself is one. I am confident that the findings will be of great importance to organizations in aligning expectations gaps.

The research helped me to understand how to write a report and sensitize data while looking at previous work and understanding how to compare and contrast which will be of great advantage to me in the world of work when comforted with multiple situations. Also, I do feel like my self-confidence, listening and communication skills have improved greatly, from this research which I believe will greatly benefit my future career endeavors

Lastly, I got transferable skills and learned skills like asking the correct question to get the appropriate data for this study. I learnt how to come up and understand themes and idea and how well they can be tackled which would be of great advantage to any organization I will be joining.

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## APPENDIX A



### INFORMATION SHEET

I Bolanle Alao am undergoing my master's at National College of Ireland. I would like to take this avenue to thank you for considering participating in the study carried out by me and supervised by Doctor Michael Cleary-Gaffney. Your decision to participate in this study is entirely voluntary and if you feel uncomfortable at any point in time you have the right to withdraw without any question. **Purpose**

The study is concerned with investigating the job expectation of post-graduate students due to enter the workforce in Ireland.

#### **What will the study involve?**

The interview is a semi-structured interview in which should only take between 45minute to an hour to complete will involve participant discussing their opinions and expectations of jobs in Ireland. The interview will be audio-recorded and analysed for proper review for qualitative data. Data generated from the interview will be anonymized assessed thematically, critically evaluated and presented anonymously in the research.

#### **Why have you been asked to take part?**

You have been selected to take part in the study as it requires a sample of participants who share similar or same characteristics e.g. Age bracket, development opportunities and career expectation.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

For the purpose of this study, participation is voluntary, and you would be expected to sign a consent form (see attached). You will be allowed to retain the information sheet and a copy of the signed consent form and by signing the consent form you are giving an approval to participate in the interview. You have a maximum of two weeks to notify me after your interview date should you decide to withdraw from this study At any point

you do wish to withdraw all identifiable data will be destroyed and not included in the study but once you sign up on the transcript you cannot withdraw.

**Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes, there will be no clue of your identity in the thesis. All extracts will be entirely anonymous.

**What will happen to the information which you give?**

The data generated from the research will be kept confidential and all data will be stored on my personal research computer in a password protected file which will be strictly protected. A back up G-drive file will be stored on my personal external hard drive for the duration of the study. You will not be identified in any report or publication resulting from this study as personal information will be deleted after analysis.

**What will happen to the result?**

The result will be transcribed into script where you would have the option of reading it. It will be seen by my supervisor and the result will be presented in the thesis. The thesis will be stored for 7years in the school of business at National College of Ireland (NCI), may be accessible to future student on the course and also be published in a research journal.

**Are there possible disadvantage of taking part in this interview?**

I do not foresee any negative consequences for you taking part in this interview, as professional boundaries of my role as an interviewer will be established.

If you have any further information or queries kindly contact me as follows:

**Email:** [x17158893@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x17158893@student.ncirl.ie) **Mobile:** 089-94664xx or [michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie](mailto:michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie)

Once again, thank you for your consideration to participate in this research. If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

**APPENDIX B**



**CONSENT FORM**

I..... agree to participate in Bolanle Alao research study entitled “Job Expectations of Post-Graduate Student due to enter the workforce in Ireland”

(Please indicate your involvement by ticking the sentences that you agree with)

Tick to Agree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I voluntarily consent to participate in the study.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I give permission for my interview with Bolanle Alao to be audio recorded.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time without consequences and repercussions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that anonymity of my identity and confidentiality of my contribution will be ensured by disguising my identity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data in which case the material will be deleted.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis ad any subsequent publications.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand the role and responsibilities of both interviewer and interviewee in the interviewee in the interview process.

**Participant’s Signature** .....

**Date** .....

**Researcher’s Signature** .....



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Questions**

1. Why did you decide to pursue your postgraduate degree?
2. What motivated you to choose the course of study?
3. What are your preferences and expectancies as regard job expectations?
4. What is the major job-related expectations that would affect your decisions to work for a company?
5. Do you feel that having a postgraduate degree are valuable and appropriate to the labor market you wish to join?
6. What are your job expectations of your first job after you graduate?
7. How well do you feel that your job expectations aligns with the workforce?