

**An Exploratory Study of Workplace
Fun through the Lens of Working
Mothers**

**By
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Abstract

Google, Facebook and Airbnb – what are the common aspect these companies have? Fun! Workplace fun has increasingly gaining job seekers' attention and many surveys and reports are showing the main reason as to why some companies are attracting applicants more than others.

This study aims to explore workplace fun in the context of working mothers in organizations. The main goal is to identify if the positive outcomes of workplace fun is consistent in working mothers. Workplace fun is a relatively new topic in the organizational studies and the relationship between workplace fun and working mothers is limited in literature findings.

The study is carried out through qualitative and inductive approach. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews on a small sample of six working mothers of different nationalities and age groups with children of around the same age of and one participant have two children over the age of 20s.

The results demonstrated working mothers are not necessarily enjoying workplace fun as much as their colleagues due to family obligations. It has been discovered that working mothers are experiencing guilt when they are away from their children. The participants are not necessarily gaining the benefits of workplace fun as mentioned in previous literature. It also appeared that culture is a big factor as to why the participants are not experiencing workplace fun. The study also explored the stress level of working mothers to find out if workplace fun can act as stress release mechanism. The result shows that indeed working mothers are finding workplace fun as stress releasing. These findings could provoke organizations to create an inclusive working environment for working mothers. Future studies could focus on larger samples or on one organization.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The term workplace fun is receiving a considerable attention lately in many surveys and news articles where many organizations are being labelled as fun organizations such as Google, Lululemon and Facebook (Heiss, 2018). These companies are often becoming the 'most desirable' organizations to work for by many job seekers especially the Millennials because of the flexible, human and supportive work environment.

Studies have shown the impacts of workplace fun bring to the organization and the different elements of workplace fun. However the topic of workplace fun is relatively new in organizational studies, there is very limited research on the topic of how workplace fun is perceived by individuals'. Many researchers have recommended future research to examine workplace fun contextually.

This study attempts to enrich the study of workplace fun through the context of working mothers because of the high level of stress working mothers are facing everyday. One benefit of workplace fun is the positive atmosphere it brings to organization and the ability to act as buffer against stress (Tews, Michel and Allen, 2019). The context of working mothers is chosen because the numbers of dual income family are increasing. The researcher would like to explore workplace from working mothers' viewpoint, to explore if the experience of workplace fun changes when the target is on working mothers. Very little is known about workplace fun and working mothers in the literature according to a systemic search of academic journals, which indicates the importance of this study.

1.2 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is presented in seven structures outlined as follow:

Chapter 1: Background and overview of the study.

Chapter 2: A summary outline of the up to date literature on workplace fun and the relationship between stress and working mother.

Chapter 3: Outlines of research aim, questions and objectives.

Chapter 4: Description of research methodology and justification of the chosen methodology.

Chapter 5: Findings of collected interview data through thematic analysis and organized by emerging themes and sub-themes.

Chapter 6: Discussion of themes from the analysis and revisit of research questions.

Chapter 7: A summary of research findings and recommendations for future research and employers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to identify the different elements and impacts of workplace fun on employees. The chapter begins with different definitions and elements of workplace fun in organization focusing on organic and inorganic fun. This is followed by the advantages and disadvantages of workplace fun experienced by employees. In addition, this chapter examines how workplace fun has evolved in the last century with focus on workforce demographics and gender. The final part of this chapter reviews the role of working mother and their stress.

In brief, the literature review has shown there is a huge gap in addressing the workplace fun in the context of life experience such as motherhood. This dissertation therefore aims to explore workplace fun and working mother contextually.

2.2 Definition of workplace fun

Fun is a positive terminology and can be used interchangeably with words such as enjoyment, happy, pleasant, joke and celebration. Workplace is the organization environment including the location, organization culture and structure. Ford, McLaughlin and Newstrom. (2003) define workplace fun as “a fun environment intentionally encourages, initiates and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities that positively impact the attitude and productivity of individuals and group” based a study on fun environment and its advantages for employees from the viewpoint of human resource managers (Ford *et al.*, 2003, pp. 22) and that a fun work environment should be encouraged and supported in all levels of management in order to achieve maximum beneficial in the organization. Likewise, Lamm and Meeks (2009) defined workplace fun as “playful, social, interpersonal, recreational or task activities intended to provide amusement, enjoyment or pleasure” (Lamm & Meeks, 2009, pp. 614) based on a study of the relationship between workplace fun and

workplace outcomes on employees of different generations. Fluegge (2008, pp. 15) has used similar choice of words on the definition of which she defines workplace fun as “any social, interpersonal or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment or pleasure”.

There is a consistence use of positive language in previous literature and drawing from this aspect, Tews *et al.* (2019, pp. 99) define fun as ‘characteristics or features of work environment of a social, playful, and humorous nature, which have to potential to trigger positive feelings of enjoyment, amusement and light-hearted pleasure in individuals’. However, positive feelings are drawn from our personal emotions and workplace fun can therefore be different to everyone and this makes it a subjective matter and unique to everyone.

2.3 Elements of Workplace Fun

Existing literature has many different ways of describing what are the different types of fun activities in workplace. One way of determining fun activities is to identify whether fun happens organically or in-organically. Organic fun is the natural occurring interactions arise among employees through spontaneous activities (Georganta and Montgomery, 2018; Plester, Cooper-Thomas and Winquist, 2015; Bolton and Houlihan, 2009) and it is usually consisting of elements such jokes, banter and humour among employees. This type of fun can be varied, depending on the closeness of relationship among the employees. By contrast, inorganic fun is organized and managed fun, and are closely related and often categorized together. However Georganta and Montgomery (2018) has differentiated both and they conceptualised organized fun as activities organized among colleagues and management are usually not involved in the organization of the activities whereas managed fun is carefully managed and introduced consciously and strategically by the managers to meet organization objectives (Plester *et al.*, 2015; Bolton and Houlihan, 2009). This includes company organized dinner, family

day and gift exchanges (Plester *et al.*, 2005; Karl, Peluchette, Hall and Harland, 2005; Karl, Peluchette and Hall, 2008; Ford *et al.*, 2003).

The difference between organized and managed fun is the relationship of people who are participating the activities. Organized fun involves employees who are close to each other proactively organizing activities they enjoy together such as organized lunches (Georganta and Montgomery, 2018) whereas managed fun can be happened in a larger scale under a controlled environment. However organizations might experience negative effect of managed fun such as run the risk of backfiring and creating a discomfort and awkward environment for the employees (Plester *et al.*, 2005). In other words, it is losing the core purpose of fun and thus creating a burden for employees. Furthermore, it is argue that the managed fun has symbolically created the blurring boundary between working and non-working hours for the employees (Fleming, 2005) mainly by activities organized in outside of working hours. A study conducted by Fleming (2005) on “Sunray Customer Service” suggests that fun in this context is perceived as negative and employees are associating it with words such as “plastic, fake and cheesy”. It outlines the inauthenticity and sincerity of the company in creating workplace fun purposely where employees are obliged to participate. The study has pointed out the “collective memory” created by the organization has reminded the employees of their negative experience they had when they were in their youth such as school where they were in a controlled environment that they did not necessarily wanted to be there. It has been suggested that perhaps in a managed fun environment, not everyone would enjoy the activities organized by the managers and the concept of what is fun is different to everyone (Plester *et al.*, 2015). With respect to this, Tews, Michel and Stafford (2013) argue the resistance of employees to actively participate in workplace fun may due to the incongruent of the activities and other aspect of work. If fun activities and the support from managers are aligning, fun activities should be effective and employees would

perceive workplace fun as genuine rather than artificial, and thus creating positive outcomes (Tews *et al.*, 2013).

It is important to acknowledge workplace fun is subjective experience and it has multiple facets. Managers would have more difficulties in creating a fun working environment in a larger organization because of the dynamic personalities of the employees. There is a negative relationship found between large organization by the number of employees and the fun activities available (Ford *et al.*, 2003). To what extent are employees experiencing fun is varied and there is no consensus as to what activities work best in organization (Ford *et al.*, 2003). Karl *et al.* (2005) have found employees' attitude towards fun is positively related to trust and it could be a pre-existing condition for workplace fun to happen organically. This is usually the case for employees who are close to each other and have fostered friendship among them. Karl and his colleagues argued that organization with low level of trust might treat workplace fun with 'resistance and cynicism' (Karl *et al.*, 2005). It is also discovered that food related activities are often used as fun element in workplace for celebratory activities, whether it is during work or after work. Interestingly, trust relationship among employees and their line managers was found to be higher in food related activities in their study, employees are more willing to spend time or share food with people whom they have higher level of trust (Karl *et al.*, 2005).

2.4 Positive outcomes

The importance of fun at work has been emphasized by not just a growing number of scholars, but also practitioners and managers. Many companies on the 'The 100 best companies to work for in America' such as Google and Southwest Airlines are known for its fun element in the workplace (Karl *et al.*, 2005). In fact these companies incorporate fun in workplace through company values and cultures of which they truly believe in the positive outcomes of workplace fun can bring to the organization through positive interaction and engagement among the employees (Vorhauser-Smith, 2013).

A number of researches have demonstrated the importance of having fun at workplace base on the positive outcomes such as job satisfaction (Karl, Peluchette and Harland, 2007; Karl and Peluchette, 2006a; Choi, Kwon and Kim, 2013), task performance (Tews *et al.*, 2013; Lamm and Meeks, 2009), applicant attractions (Tews *et al.*, 2012) and organization citizenship behaviour (Lamm and Meeks, 2009). Karl and Peluchette (2006b) found positive relationship between experienced fun and job satisfaction in a sample of undergraduate students who are employed in customer service work environment. Similarly in healthcare setting, Karl *et al.*, (2007) also found healthcare workers to have experienced higher job satisfaction when they have greater level of fun at workplace. Along in this research, it is also found employees to have less emotional exhaustion and emotional dissonance when they have experienced workplace fun.

This result also reflects the voluntary sector of which Karl *et al.* (2008) found workplace fun creates positive attitudes among the volunteers and it is positively related to job satisfaction and it also correlates with lower turnover intentions. Industries such as hospitality and retails often have high employees turnovers and the continuing increase in employees' turnover will affect an organization's ability to grow revenue and sustain profits. A 2018 Retention Report reveals the most

preventable reasons for employees to leave an organization includes work-life balance, well-being and work environment, these three factors are accountable for almost 30% of the surveyed individuals who leave their job (Work Institute, 2018). Tews, Michel and Stafford (2014) demonstrated that fun activities in workplace has a significant impact on turnover in the hospitality industry and claim that workplace fun could be a viable strategy to reduce turnover, especially among the younger and entry-level employees. Given the high turnover, managements are under pressure to fill in vacancy quickly and could potentially hire under-qualified employees, and therefore compromise the customers' experience (Tews *et al.*, 2013). The study (2013) shows younger employees value the establishment of relationship and attachment through work, and workplace fun compensates for other negative aspects of the hospitality industry such as lower pay rate and opportunities for advancement. Another positive outcome found in the

There is also correlation that a fun environment creates better work performance. A notable example in previous literature is Southwest Airline, which the organization's key to success is to treat its employee the way their customers would like to be treated (Lancaster, 1999). This example is supported by Karl and Peluchette (2006b) study of customer service quality and job satisfaction, which they found that employees who have higher work satisfaction are perceived to have more 'reliable, responsive and empathetic' customer service. This could be due to the reason the employees are in positive mood and are more energetic and willing to help customers. The argument is supported by Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory that positive emotions optimize our inner potential to perform such as creativity and productivity and it is found to have positive outcome of customer satisfaction when we display positive self-conscious emotion such as empathy (Bakker, 2013). The general assumption is to believe that a happy and satisfied employee would have less stress and therefore creates positive outcomes as well that the fun activities enable employees an opportunity to break from their hectic work (Tews *et al.*, 2019).

Additionally, Dries, Pepermans and De Kerpel. (2008) explored the concept of generations' beliefs about career, whether it is success or satisfied and they found that job satisfaction increased with generations and that it is becoming an overriding factor when measuring career success, largely due to reason that job security, career advancement and salary increases are no longer applicable to everyone. Employees need to find other ways to measure career success and job satisfaction becomes inevitable while traditional ways to measure career success is disappearing in the public eyes. The reoccurrence of these variables in empirical studies suggests these are elements contribute towards employees' motivation to commit in an organization, especially for the millennials who value work differently to their predecessors. There is an extensive mention of millennials in the exiting articles to which workplace fun is deliberately created in order to achieve high productivity, task performance and job satisfaction (Lamm and Meeks, 2009; Tews, Michel and Drost, 2015; Choi *et al.*, 2013).

2.5 Negative Outcomes

Despite all the positive outcomes of workplace fun, Tews *et al.* (2013) found negative impact on employees' performance and argues managers may have allow too much fun resulting a slack off attitude in employees when completing their tasks. There is a concern of too much fun activities at work reduces employees' productivity and performance. A study of two call centres in the UK reveals humour and joking at workplace weakens managerial authority and legitimacy where organization culture is in conflict with the organization's aims and priorities (Taylor and Bain, 2003). It is also found that workplace fun does not necessarily has high engagement in public sector because of the slow-to change culture, it is highly unlikely for managers to welcome fun activities and the argument is to consider the promotion of employee well-being instead of fun (Baptise, 2009). Arguably, there is also possibility for public sector to refrain from participating in fun

activities because of the concern to be portrayed as ‘not serious enough’ in their work (Ford *et al.*, 2003).

2.6 How Workplaces Have Evolved?

Fun environment is without doubt growing in popularity and hugely accepted by management and employees nowadays. The bargaining power of the job seekers are higher than what it used to be and many are often searching for a job to fulfil beyond material rewards (McDowell, Ehteshami and Sandell, 2019). Figure 1 shows how workplace has evolved in the past decades. The key driver to this dramatic change is socialization among employees where work has evolved from routine manual labour to cognitive jobs and the trend is moving towards high cognitive level job as low level tasks are becoming automated (Kadokia, 2017).

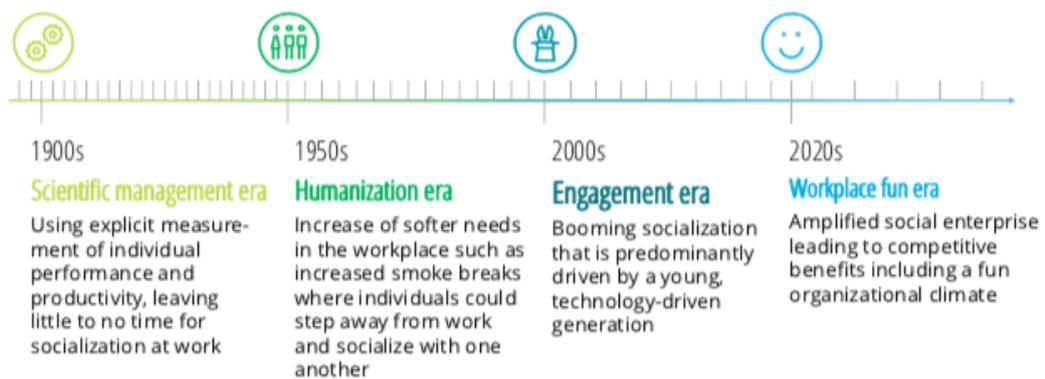


Figure 1 How workplaces have evolved, (McDowell, Ehteshami and Sandell, 2019).

2.6.1 Psychological Contract

The concept of psychological contract is fundamental when it comes to understanding workplace experiences. It is a set of expectations between the employees and employers of what are expected from both sides during their employment relationship (Reimann, Pausch and Diewald, 2017). These expectations however can be different because it is built on the foundation of “how people interpret promises and commitments” (Rousseau, Wade-Benzoni and Kimberly, 1994, pp. 466) as well that it has the characteristics of unspoken and unwritten between the employee and employer (Schein, 1980).

psychological contracts 'iceberg' model



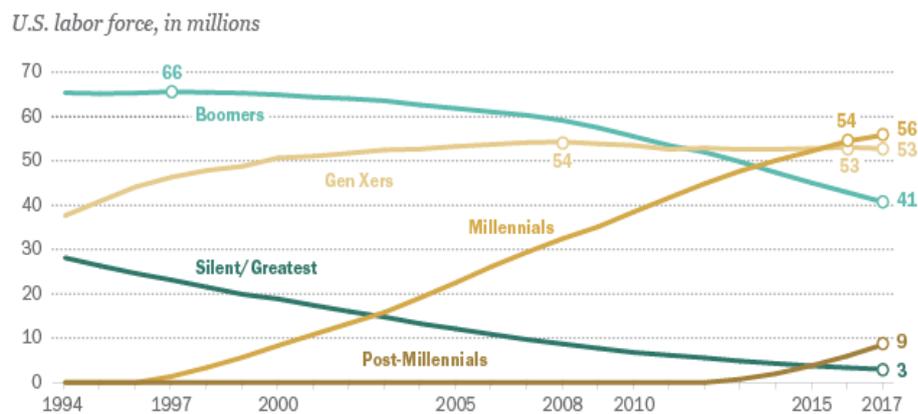
Figure 2 Psychological Contracts 'Iceberg' Model

From the 'iceberg' model (Figure 2), it is visible that work and pay are the only formally agreed expectation however in reality, there might be many other factors the employees are expected from the employer and vice versa. The different inputs and rewards below the water line of the iceberg are the hidden and subjective factors of both parties. Factors such as life-balance, wellbeing, flexibility and benefits are often related to fun at work. To a certain extent, these factors are now becoming more visible due to the social connectedness of society, as well that it is increasing the complexity of the relationship between employees and employer and work life balance. The expectations of employees and employer are increasing with the emphasis on creativity and flexibility, where in many organizations, employees are expected to be unique and have different opinions and solutions to problems as well that employees are expected to be available at all times as a result of globalized economy. At the same time, employers are also expected to

create a fun environment for employees because work and personal life are integrated and difficult to separate.

2.6.2 Shift in workforce demographics

The workplace fun era has come into light as a result of shift in workforce demographics and digital technology. As of 2017 the largest population by age in the United States was the millennials with 56 millions people in the labour force or looking for a job (Figure 3), and within this age group, women with children under 18 years old were accounted for a percentage of 71.3 (Table 1). This is significant as the style of working of the younger generation is redefining organization and their workspace.



Note: Labor force includes those ages 16 and older who are working or looking for work. Annual averages shown.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of monthly 1994-2017 Current Population Survey (IPUMS).

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Figure 3: Millennials became the largest generation in labor force in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Characteristic	Civilian noninstitutional population	Total	Percentage of population	Employed		Unemployed		Not in labor force
				Total	Percentage of population	Total	Percentage of labor force	
Total								
Women, 16 years and older	131,469	75,537	57.5	72,289	55.0	3,248	4.3	55,932
With children under 18 years old	34,871	24,863	71.3	23,748	68.1	1,114	4.5	10,008
With children 6 to 17, none younger	19,833	15,080	76.0	14,481	73.0	599	4.0	4,753
With children under 6 years old	15,038	9,783	65.1	9,268	61.6	515	5.3	5,255
With children under 3 years old	8,638	5,449	63.1	5,153	59.7	296	5.4	3,189
With no children under 18 years old	96,598	50,675	52.5	48,541	50.3	2,134	4.2	45,924

Table 1 Employment status, by gender, presence and age of children, race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, March 2017 (Numbers in thousands), (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Different generations are working in the same environment to create a dynamic environment more than ever. Individuals born in a particular political and social environment would have constructed unique set of values and beliefs that are different to individuals born in a different period of time. With this in mind, the need to create an inclusive environment for the employees has become inevitable through the idea of 'diversity', where different perspective, experiences, and thoughts are bring together to embrace new definition of modern workplace (Kadokia, 2017).

A study by Lamm and Meeks (2009) found the relationship between workplace fun and different age groups is relatively different. The millennials have higher association with workplace fun than the Generations Xers. The result of this also applies to employee's job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviour. However the study is not consistent and does not apply to Boomers, as the result does not show any significant of either positive or negative. They suggested the reason to this could be attributed to the fact that the research was done through online survey and the participants of their study must have some level of appreciation to new technology and there is possibility of self-selection error in their methodology (Lamm and Meeks, 2009). To a great extent, this reason is valid because the most recent entry to workforce grew up in the invention of technology, where they are more comfortable and more proactive to connect with online communication than the other generations (Choi *et al.* 2013). The study supported the argument that generations react to workplace fun differently and the Millennials have more positive associations between workplace fun and job satisfaction and task performance (Lamm and Meeks, 2009).

The main attributes of the millennials in literature are “ flexible, team oriented, fun, positive, ambitious, over-confidence and lack of commitment” (Howe and Straus, 2000; Choi *et al.*, 2013; Lamm and Meeks, 2009), where many of them believe in work-life balance and that

having fun in work is a necessity not a benefit (Lamm and Meeks, 2009). Their employers, usually Generation X or the baby boomers are complaining over the free spirit of the millennials over issues such as punctuality and their need for constant feedback, nevertheless they also agree these feedbacks allowed the Millennials to perform better (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

However, generalization of ages and generations raise question as these does not automatically dictates for individual preferences to workplace fun because roles and meanings for particular age groups are blurring. It appears that even though the study by Lamm and Meeks (2009) supported the positive relationship of millennials and workplace fun, there is still complexity within the results and individuals factor weights far more significant than the generation group as a whole.

2.7 Why working mothers?

The boundary between work and home has since turned blurry when society has become more mobile and less structured due to the submersion of new technologies into everyday life. Work has different meaning and experience to what it was in the past to many people nowadays. Everything is moving at a much faster pace and working mothers are relatively more common than in the past.

There is an extensive amount of literature discussion on the topic of working mothers and stress. This is largely due to the multiple roles women having by nature, of which they are traditionally associated with family and children. However as society evolves rapidly, women have broken the traditional frame of mind as homemaker, they are now joining men, and often becoming the sole breadwinner of the household. Study has shown 4 in 10 mothers are the primary breadwinners in 2016 in the United States and by contrast only 1 in 10 mother in 1960 (Figure 4). Yet women are still experiencing high level of stress due to the multiple roles they have.

Working Moms by the Numbers

Overview of statistics on working mothers in the United States*

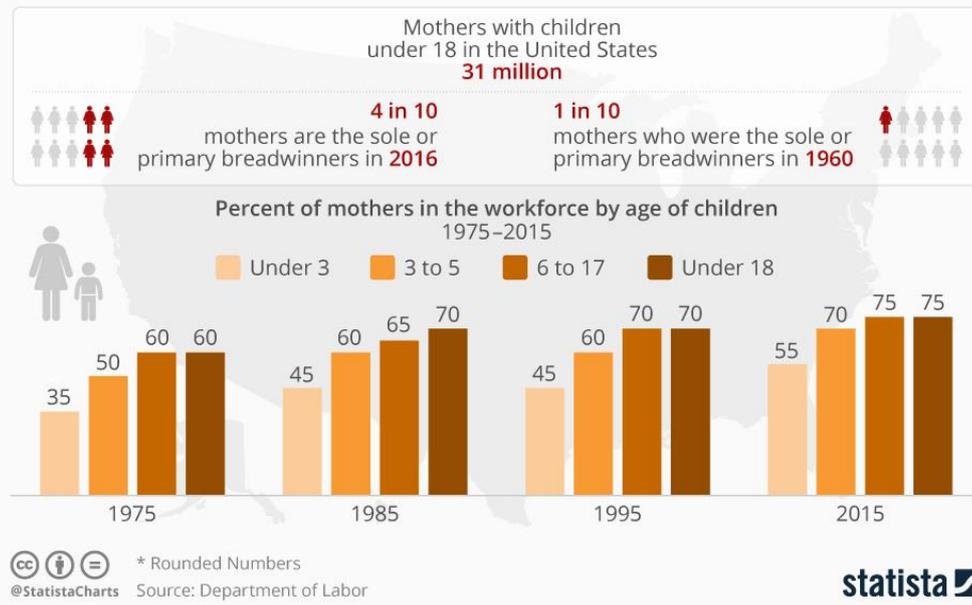


Figure 4 Working Moms by the Numbers, (Feldman, 2018).

2.7.1 Working mother and stress

With the increased in responsibilities, women's stress has expanded from family to work, role juggling has increased distress for women in the gender evolution. Working mothers with interrole juggling experienced more negative effects such as task enjoyment and work satisfaction than women with intra-role juggling or no role juggling at all (Williams *et al.*, 1991). One explanation is that inter-role juggling is a stressor for women when they have more than one objectives or demands to meet simultaneously and this may be the case where working mothers have to take care of family problems at work or they may not have the resources to solve the problem when they are either at work or at home.

As a result of more roles and responsibilities, working mothers are having greater exhaustions in time and energy (Rourt, Cooper and Kerslake, 1997) and the increased in demands and lack of predictability and control can therefore caused psychological stress (Cohen, 1980) to working mothers. Thus, more women have decided to give up their

professional career to take care of their children as compare to men, where a study was carried out in France shows 55% women's professional activity was interrupted in order to take care of their youngest child than only 12% in men (Figure 5). This study is significant because it shows there is disproportion in household and childcare responsibilities in a family even though women have had long history of entering the workforce. The family obligation is still relatively higher in women than men and women are expected to have greater responsibilities. Previous study has found the worst psychological well being in married women than unmarried women (McLanahan and Adams, 1987).

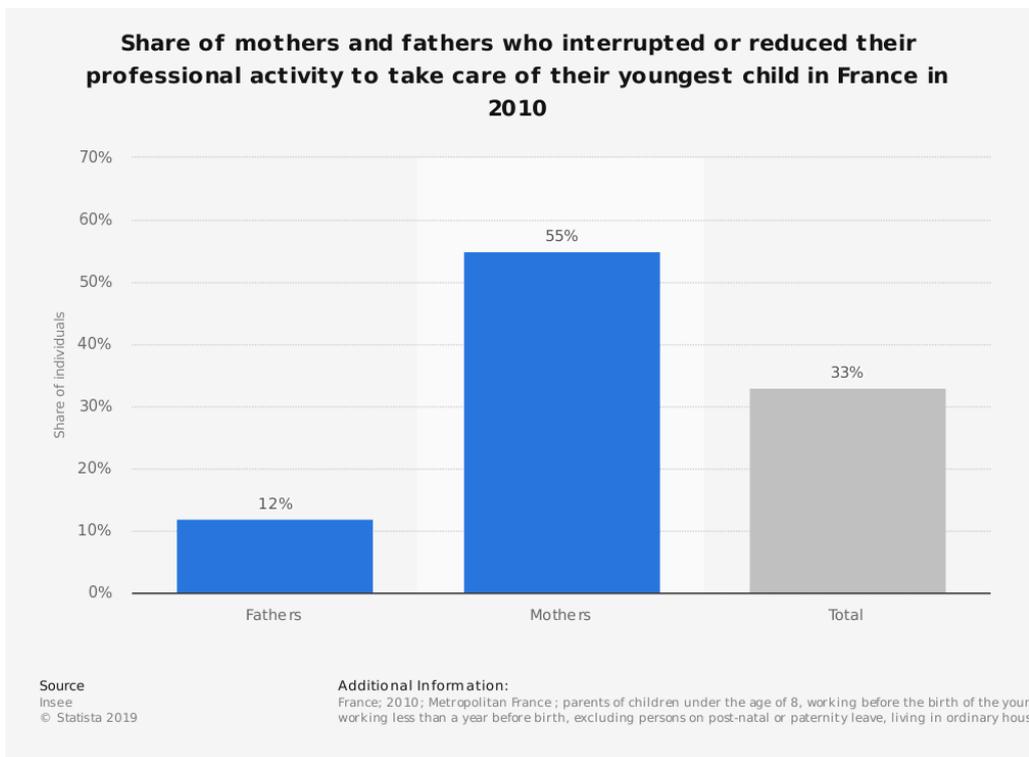


Figure 5 Share of mothers and fathers who interrupted or reduced their professional activity to take care of their youngest child in France in 2010, (Statista, 2015).

Despite the negative mental health effect in married women, a study by Sinha (2018) found positive relationship between working women and mental health. Employed women are more satisfied with life because employment is naturally associated with self-worth and achievement where Sinha (2018) further argued that employment in women might

bring egalitarian relationship to marriages. This assumption seems to be realistic because power and status are generally belonging to the partner who contributes more resources in the relationship according to the social exchange theory (Nakonezny and Denton, 2008). Income is a measurement to resources in society, with the rise of equality and feminist movement, more women are encourage to re-join workforce even after they have children. However, this may also due to economic reason where dual income family is becoming the norm to support the family economically. Nevertheless, employment is found as an important factor of mental well being to women especially in today's society where most chores can be done through the help of technology. Employment is a channel of social support where people can meet other people and for many mothers, this is significant because as the children grow up, it is natural for them to be less dependent on the mother, thus come the feeling of isolation and being confined to home is one factor to poor mental health among non working mothers (Sinha, 2018).

2.8 Workplace fun and working mothers

Base on the existing literature, it is identified that workplace fun is a stress release mechanism for employees and it entails many positive benefits such as work performance, work satisfaction and mood balance. Many researchers have acknowledged the topic of workplace fun is relatively new to organizational studies and there is a significant gap in addressing how individuals are affected by workplace fun.

Studies have shown the increased of working mothers in organizations however there is a lack of addressing their experiences of workplace fun. The high level of stress of working mothers due to role juggling between work and family is inevitable.

Furthermore, research up to this point indicates that millennials are enjoying workplace fun more than their predecessors, however it also appeared that workplace fun is subjective and other factors should be

considered. As millennials are approaching marriage life, the question is to what extent are the millennials enjoying workplace fun as research has shown? Or perhaps the factor of life experience is affecting the experience of workplace fun because they have less family obligation? Additionally research has demonstrated that fun activities as buffer to stress.

The limitation in research on the connection between workplace fun and working mothers appeared as unexplored dimension. This is an important issue to study as workplace fun and working mothers are becoming the norm of modern society.

CHAPTER 3: DISSERTATION PURPOSE AND AIM

3.1 Research Aim

The research aim of this study is an attempt to enrich the literature of workplace fun in the context of working mothers. A growing number of literatures in this topic focus mainly on the various outcomes of workplace such as work performance (Karl and Peluchette, 2006a; Karl *et al.*, 2007; Tews *et al.*, 2013; Taylor and Bain, 2013) and employees' retention (Fleming, 2005; Tews, Michel and Bartlett, 2012); elements of workplace fun (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009; Ford *et al.*, 2003; Fleming, 2005, Plester *et al.*, 2015); individual differences and preferences (Lamm and Meeks, 2009; Tews *et al.*, 2012).

Drawing on the current framework of workplace fun in literature, this study aims to explore the contextual and person-specific factor of working mothers as an attempt to address the gap in research in relation to working mothers' experience of workplace fun in their respective organizations.

3.2 Research Objectives

As the research aim is to explore workplace fun and working mothers, the following objectives were set as guidance to this study:

1. To determine the effectiveness of workplace fun in literature is replicated in working mother context.
2. To identify the type of workplace fun activities working mothers enjoy.
3. To identify the challenges of working mothers in relations to the participation of workplace fun activities.
4. To identify the common themes and patterns of working mothers' attitudes to workplace fun.

3.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to help achieve the research aim and objectives:

1. How effective is workplace fun activities designed to increase satisfaction, work performance and reduce stress of working mothers?
2. What are the workplace fun elements do working mothers like to enjoy and are there available in their respective organizations?
3. What are the main changes of a working mother's attitudes towards workplace fun as a result of becoming a parent?
4. How often do working mothers attend workplace fun activities and how is it affecting their family life?

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research methods refer to the techniques and procedures of how we obtain and analyse collected data, whether it is qualitative or quantitative (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). Methodology is the theory approach of how research should be carried out and this means the governing philosophy and science behind the researcher that justify the research methods undertaken. It translates research perspectives into a way to study reality, in other words, it is the study of how to study (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005).

The understanding of methodology is important as it allows us to be in the position to question how 'knowledge' is created and what might be wrong with the knowledge and reality we are in (Adams, 2007). This can be differing from person to person, in which researcher is guided by his own nature of truth and reality. Assumptions are made at every stages of the research. Common assumptions include epistemology and ontology where these assumptions influenced how research questions and methods are formed.

The development stages of this research study will be based on Saunders *et al.*, 2016) Research Onion Model. The six stages as classified are: philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizon and techniques & procedures (Figure 6). Every layer of the model is inter-related in that the philosophy the researcher believes in will have a significant impact on the approach, strategy and so on.

This chapter details the research process and further explanation and justification on the approach and method chosen. Finally, this chapter will continue with the limitation of the chosen methodology.

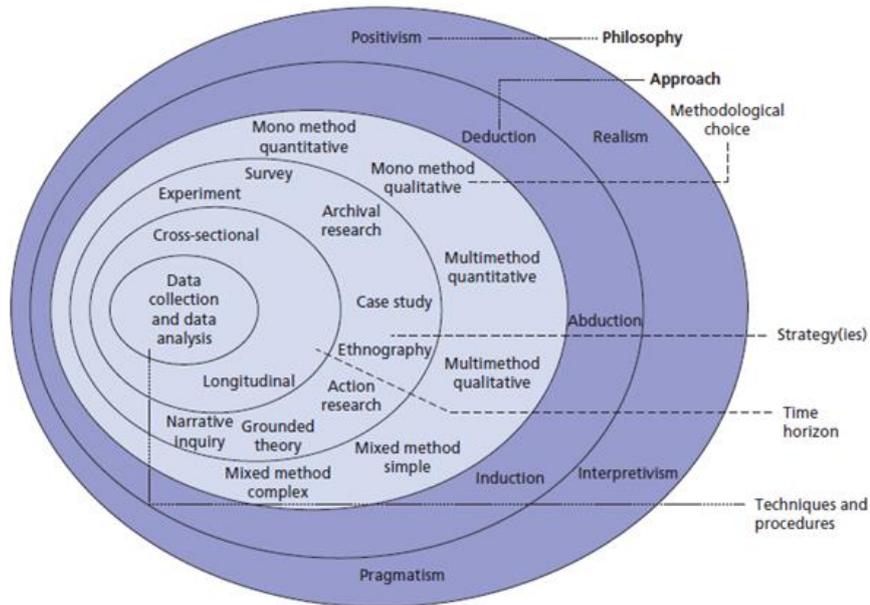


Figure 6: Research Onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

4.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a set of beliefs and assumptions in which knowledge is developed (Saunders *et al.*, 2016), in other words it is the basis of how a researcher form his research strategy, data collection and analysis. There are four major philosophies: pragmatism, interpretivism, realism and positivism. The two main ways of approaching research philosophies are ontology and epistemology.

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to the concern with the nature of reality and researcher must consider what is real and what is acceptable fact when conducting a research (Reiter, 2013). The two aspects within the category of ontology are objectivism and subjectivism.

(i) Objectivism

Objectivist believes knowledge is viewed independently and separate from human experience and consciousness. This approach believes that reality can be structured and modelled. It makes assumption that organizations are similar in nature and organization culture is what an

organization 'has', where it can be manipulated and change to fit into the favour of the organization (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

Objectivism has limitation in which it has a more simplistic viewpoint of the world. It fails to recognise the dynamic and complex environment of modern society in global environment context.

(ii) Subjectivism

Subjectivist believes reality is socially constructed and created by human perceptions (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). The essence of this approach is that the researcher is part of the research study and it is the role of researcher to seek understanding of the reality of the subject in order to find meaning of reality. The question of 'why' and 'how' the researcher understands the study is subjective to the researcher's knowledge and the challenge is to not to explore what is there, but to test the researcher's understanding against other viewpoints (Couch, Cole, Chase and Clark, 2016).

Maylor and Blackmon (2005) argue subjectivist approach is more suitable for the study of business and management phenomenon because human behaviour is different to the behaviour of natural objects because it is intangible and with flexibility to change.

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology concerns for what is and what isn't considered as acceptable knowledge in a particular field (Saunders *et al.*, 2016; Maylor and Blackmon, 2005). Singh and Walwyn (2017) describe personal epistemology as how a researcher's belief impact on the cognitive processes. It reflects on how the researcher's worldview has an influence on what constitutes as knowledge and therefore researcher must acknowledge his personal epistemology to avoid negative influence.

The main approaches under epistemology are: positivism and interpretivism.

(i) Positivism

Positivist takes the stance as natural scientist and views the world objectively and universal law governs human behaviour. Only those observable phenomena are accepted as knowledge and facts need to be verified inductively and hypotheses are to be tested empirically. Positivism research is suitable with quantitative method because researcher of this type believes in the quantifiable relations and correlation of their study subject (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

However to understand the world and reality, Max Weber (1864-1920) argued that positivist approach was not enough to fully understand people's life. He emphasized researcher must understand the context and purpose of people's action and human beings are "cultural beings" that find meanings in reality. It is naive to regard the world by facts only, and he explained this approach is lacking in viewing the reality in big picture and meaningless in evaluating and validating ideas (Shils and Finch, 1949).

(ii) Interpretivism

Interpretivist takes the opposite approach of positivist and believes the human behaviour does not governed by universal law. The emphasis of interpretivism is on creating meanings and the study of these meanings. Interpretivist believes in multiple realities and the focus is on the social actors including the researcher rather than the object, where the interactions among social actors are considered to be important and cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

The understanding of meanings between the social experiences among people, to which the context of people's lived experience, is important to understand why a particular action happened. An interpretivism researcher must adopt an empathetic perspective and interpret the actions of the study subject, where 'understanding' is just as important as

observing experiences (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). To explain this further, some researchers argue that interpretivism is simply describing an event rather than trying to understand a phenomenon (Baškarada and Koronios, 2018).

Interpretivist research usually takes the qualitative approach to attempt to understand the views of participants and the context of their actions. As this study is to explore the perspective of workplace fun from a working mother standpoint, an interpretivism approach was considered to be appropriate because the purpose of this study is to create richer understanding and interpretations of workplace environment and its contexts.

4.2.3 Dilemma

Saunders *et al.* (2016) explains that it is important to recognise philosophical disagreements is apart of the research however the dilemma for many researchers facing today is the incoherent classification of research philosophies, where there is an overlapping in meanings and emphasis.

The observation put forward by Mkansi and Acheampong (2012) was that these philosophies have many commonality where they share the same assumptions but with different implications. Their study of PhD students across three UK universities revealed that 69.2% of students found research philosophical debates and its classifications to be confusing and difficult to understand. This surprising result has put forward the question that the lack of consensus by scholars in the field of research philosophical debate was meant to be enriching the knowledge of students or to create difficulties in conducting a research study. This study pose the question as to how should research students approach their research study because they are so many ways to approach this.

There is no right or wrong answer as to which research philosophy is better, it is the thought processes behind it that matters and allows

people to understand how the world works and behave. The development of the researcher's belief is therefore fundamental as it translates research question into 'truth'. Researcher must be aware of the assumptions and beliefs he has in order to minimise negative influence on the research, where the aim of the research is to produce new knowledge rather than an activity of self-fulfilling (Singh and Walwyn, 2017).

4.3 Research Approach

The main approaches outlined by the research onions are deductive and inductive. Both approaches are valid depending what research philosophy the researcher upholds.

4.3.1 Deductive Approach

The origin of deductive approach is from natural sciences and the idea behind this approach is to test the hypotheses based on an existing theory and the conclusion is to either verify or falsify the theory through a logical process of evaluating proposition or hypotheses (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). To explain this approach in a simpler way, deductive approach is to use evidence to support conclusion (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The advantage of deductive approach includes the possibility of generalize a certain research findings. Spector *et al.*, (2014) explains that most theories nowadays are under-tested and there is a need to organize and synthesize knowledge in a particular field. However, they also argued deductive approach has its drawback in discouraging new ways of thinking and by testing a priori hypotheses, it is at risk of leading to confirmation bias of a theory.

Positivism research would usually take the form of deductive as this approach aims to explain the relationships between concepts and variables. Positivists assume that "laws and antecedent conditions specified in the premises are independent from one another" (Faber and Scheper, 2003, pp. 137), and in the condition of "if ... then..." where the "if..." part of the proposition is valid when refers to scientific laws and

regularities, therefore the “then...” part of the proposition will also be valid and logical.

Faber and Scheper (2003) however argues that context is important and “if... then...” has its flaw because the condition does not necessarily apply to everyone. He used the example of daily quality food intake by people can improve health to explain context matters. To measure this, he operates “daily quality food intake” as people’s average daily intake of calories and “health improvement” as the absence of diseases and starvation. He compares the Americans’ daily intake of calories with developing countries and in this condition, he argues that Americans require larger amount of calories intake to stay healthy however the “if... then...” proposition does not satisfy because the quality of calories matters. If the intake of calories contains mostly fat and sugar, then there is higher chance of health risk rather than improving health. He further explains that people’s low life expectancy can be due to several reasons such as insufficient healthcare, food shortages and dangerous job. By illustrating this example Faber and Scheper (2003) argues that context is a necessary approach to unambiguous explanation and it is impossible to catch all circumstances into account.

4.3.2 Inductive Approach

Inductive approach is the development of model or theory from collecting raw data and observing patterns to explore a phenomenon, without restrained by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). This approach is commonly used in qualitative data analysis to find common themes and patterns, to which many researchers refer this as coding.

However, inductive approach has received many debates where Lakatos (1970) argued inductive is sceptical because it consists of unproven proposition and he claimed it as pseudoscience. He argued that inductive consists of generalization of a phenomenon that is not scientific to which Popper (1963) further argued that inductive is a myth that ‘neither a

psychological fact, nor a fact of ordinary life, nor one of scientific procedure' (Popper, 1963, pp. 53)

Popper believed that theory is informed by continuous trial and error and corroboration, inductive approach is therefore 'superfluous' because the connection between cause and effect is not necessarily logical and valid or even connected to begin with. To him, every test on a theory is an attempt to falsify or refute a theory (Popper, 1963). His argument was based on 18th century philosopher David Hume's 'belief base on probability' viewpoint that the principal of inductive is to use past events as guide for future and to a certain extent it is a form of 'probability logic', to which it is 'probably valid' due to the generalization of a series of observations and theory needs to be falsified by new experiments to become more 'probable' (Thornton, 2005). The argument to this was that by justifying and standardizing past events to understand future events, people are therefore assuming future on the basis of probability. This applies to causes and effects where people are assuming two things are connected together because of the similarity associated in the past, and when a theory is found to be false but still being upheld by its followers, it is then considered as ad-hoc in order to escape the refutation.

By contrast, David Stove criticised on Popper's scepticism over induction and believed that philosophers have misused the word 'inductive' in the past. He emphasized that induction is a descriptive condition that satisfy some propositions; it is not an evaluative argument with a definitive conclusion (Stove, 1982). Gardner (2001) argued that explanation is an important factor of induction and it "explained data previously unexplained" (2001, pp.13). This means, context matters especially in social sciences to explain a problem. The conceptualization of observable social phenomenon is the first step towards theory building according to Faber and Scheper (2003) and to test and validate a theory, they explained that statistical explanations of the observed phenomenon is needed otherwise every observed phenomenon will be suffered from validation. Their work has emphasized the importance of inductive

approach and further suggests that the measurement and testing of meanings is second steps to theory building. Meanings can be categorized by themes and characteristics.

For this reason, this research study will use the approach of induction to explore the presented research questions. It is believed that social theory formation is not in deadlock and the complexity of social phenomenon needs to be described in the foundation building of a theory.

4.4 Research Design Methods

The research onion illustrates three main methodological choices: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. A way to differentiate qualitative from quantitative is the use of numeric data and non-numeric data. Park and Park (2016) differentiate quantitative and qualitative as justification and discovery. In social sciences, qualitative method is dominant in the sense that it is context dependent. Having considered the available methodologies, the researcher has decided to apply qualitative method on this study.

4.4.1 Quantitative Method

Quantitative research is commonly associated with deductive approach where the focus is on examining the relationships between variables, testing hypotheses and statistical analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Park and Park (2016) explains that this method is useful for justification of theory because quantitative method takes place in a controlled environment in order to isolate variables other than the one being studied. This helps the researcher to rule out bias so that the phenomenon can be studied and understood objectively.

Many research relating to workplace fun opted for quantitative approach. Karl *et al.* (2005) applied factor analysis across public, private and non-profit sectors to test several hypotheses including the level of favourable attitudes towards fun is lower in public sector than private and non-profit. Their method approach was appropriate to find out what are the common fun activities enjoyed by all three sectors however it has limitations

categorizing what type of work performed was more stressful and different people have different level of stress coping mechanism therefore for this reason, context is needed to find out individuals attitudes towards fun.

Similarly, the quantitative approach by Lamm and Meeks (2009) shows the relationship between workplace fun and age generations, life experiences of individuals are shaping the workplace. It is important to acknowledge that the society we are living is interconnected where one event has impact on another. Benefit such as work satisfaction requires a strong positive attitude, where this factor is complicated and it can have different meanings to different employees.

Base on the exploratory nature of this research, quantitative method was considered to be less suitable. To truly understand the fundamental of workplace fun in organization, it is necessary to explore the different realities in workplace, of which every individual have their own perception and meanings to workplace fun, in this research, it is value and meanings of the working mothers.

4.4.2 Qualitative Method

Qualitative research is defined as “ a set of interpretative, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices... turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations” Denzin and Lincoln (2008: pp.3). There is wide consensus in among researchers that qualitative research is concern of understanding the meanings of a certain phenomena (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). According to Park and Park (2016) qualitative method is suitable for theoretical findings and discovery as part of the research process. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) explain that the aim of qualitative research design is to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of social sciences through participants’ experiences, perspectives and histories. This includes viewing social experiences as holistic perspective and processes.

A qualitative approach to research is commonly used in an inductive approach for theory building and it is often used by interpretivists with the perspective to construct knowledge rather than proving reality. Some of the main qualitative methods include in-depth individual interviews, focus groups, observation and analysis of documents and texts. Researchers of this type aim to answer questions of 'what is', 'how' and 'why', that is to address social phenomenon questions in "discovery orientation", and the key to this approach is to understand reality as socially constructed.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) highlight the relevance of qualitative approach is especially useful especially if the phenomenon is unclear under quantitative analysis. Previous researchers have suggested qualitative research on workplace fun is needed on how individuals interpreted workplace fun (Tews *et al.*, 2019; Lamm and Meeks, 2009).

4.4.3 Research Design Rationale

The exploratory element of this research has justified the choice of qualitative method instead of quantitative method in order to understand the research topic and research individuals closer. The purpose of the study is to explore workplace fun from a working mother point of view. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions is chosen where the focus will be on the content of the narrative and the connections between workplace fun and working mothers in terms of family life. This method is chosen to allow more in-depth responses to the topic and to allow the researcher to follow up with responses that required more clarifications.

Although quantitative method is commonly seen in the research of workplace fun, but from the existing literature, it is identified that the positive outcomes of workplace fun is subjective in nature due to its characteristics. Social actors from different backgrounds socially construct organization, where everyone brings in different set of values to create a shared meaning and realities (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore the gap in existing research meant that there is necessity to understand workplace fun contextually and interpretively in order to create new meanings and learnings by analysing the participants' experiences.

4.5 Time Horizon

Saunders *et al.* (2016) articulates the importance of time horizon, that it depends on the chosen research methodology to decide the timeframe of the research study. The research onion outlines 2 types of time horizon – cross-sectional and longitudinal.

A cross-sectional study is the study of a particular phenomenon at a particular timeframe where as longitudinal is a study carried out over a period of time and repeated observations are taken to gain insights or development of the phenomenon (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). However this method has its disadvantage in sample selection where it is hard to determine sample size (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

As this research has focus on the context of workplace fun from working mothers' point of view, it is suitable to use cross-sectional method. The researcher also acknowledged the time frame constraint of the overall dissertation process may be challenging for longitudinal method.

4.6 Data Collection

The researcher has chosen exploratory research design for this study. Since this is a quantitative study, the data collected are to be understood within the context and analysed with an interpretative approach. The researcher conducted a literature review to understand the previous research within the topic and the collected data are to be analysed contextually.

4.6.1 Research Evaluation

There are two classic evaluation techniques to test the credibility of a research finding, reliability and validity. Evaluation process should be acknowledged and take place during the whole process of the research to reduce the possibility of getting wrong answer, as well as the

understanding of research logic of quantitative and qualitative is vital because the confusion may lead to poor evaluation performance (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

Reliability is the extent to which the collected data techniques and measurements yields the consistent findings on replicate trials (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Collis and Hussey, 2009). In order to do so, Saunders *et al.* (2016) have suggested having more than one researcher during interviews or observations, and evaluate on to what extent they agree on the collected data. An example of threat to reliability in this research is researcher bias, of which the researcher may ask questions that are bias judgement in the interviews.

Validity refers to whether the conclusions from research are accurate description of the phenomenon or carried out research. In principal, the findings should be backed by evidence however the debate of whether validity is a suitable method for evaluation by many qualitative researchers (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). As this research is focus on interviewing participants' experience of workplace fun, there is potential that the participants' perception of workplace fun may be affected by past events. Arguably, this could also be an advantage because this research is exploratory in nature, the aim of the researcher is to explore and interpret workplace fun from working mother lenses rather than finding out the correlation and causal relation of working mother and workplace fun.

Therefore, Saunders *et al.* (2016) argued that validity is more suitable for quantitative research and it is rather inadequate for qualitative research from interpretative philosophy standpoint. The challenges for many qualitative researchers are generalizations and false assumption of the study phenomenon. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explained that based on the researcher's research philosophy, different sets of evaluation method should apply, and for this research, the suggestion was to replace the traditional evaluation method to the a concept of

trustworthiness developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Furthermore, Quinlan (2011) argued that qualitative researchers are usually not concerned with numbers and they do not support the scientific way of understanding the realities. Realities are constructed by unique individuals through interactive process thus cannot be examined the same way as quantitative researchers.

The alternative quality criterion is appropriate for this research because the central of the research is based on the interpretative assumption that the world is socially constructed. The researcher is concerned with the truthfulness of this research and to what extent are the readers find meanings in this research.

(i.) Credibility is the degree to which the findings are believable and the participants represent the socially constructed realities the researcher intended to understand. In this research, the credibility lies on the participants' role as working mothers.

(ii.) Dependability refers to the researcher's responsibility of recording all the changes during the interviews to produce a logical and traceable research in order for the research to be trustworthy.

(iii.) Transferability is the ability to link the researcher's finding to previous research where the idea is to find similarity instead of replication. This is important for interpretivist research because the understanding is to reflect the world is socially constructed.

(iv.) Confirmability is the degree to which the conclusion from the interviews was interpreted accurately from the participants and not based on researcher bias judgement.

4.6.2 Primary Data

Primary data are empirical data collected by researcher through interviews, observations, diary entries, drawing or any form of presented information (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

For this research, the researcher has chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews to gain in depth knowledge of the participants' experiences towards workplace fun. The researcher has rejected the use of structured and unstructured interviews and questionnaires because they are deemed to be rigid and unsuitable for the purpose of this study, where the researcher would not be able to collect data to explore the study in depth, as well that structured interviews are more commonly found within quantitative research. Saunders *et al.* (2016) explained personal contacts are important because participants are more likely to agree to be interviewed than completing questionnaires if they found the topic to be interesting.

Audio recording was recommended to overcome the comprehensive note taking process as well as to avoid distortions, errors and bias in filter data subjectively (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

4.6.3 Secondary Data

In order to collect contextual background information of the topic of workplace fun, literature review examining journals, reports and dissertations was carried out. The main themes to explore were the elements of workplace fun, workplace fun outcomes, and working mothers.

For this particular research topic, there are very limited researches done on the linkage between workplace fun and working mother. Therefore the researcher has decided to conduct an exploratory study to address the gap in this research area.

4.7. Research Instrument

4.7.1 Interviews

The primary data collection for this study is through semi-structured interviews because they allow the researcher to explore different themes of workplace fun throughout the interviews base on the flow of the interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, this method is aligning with the researcher's research philosophy, approach and design.

An interview guide (appendix 3) with list of questions were developed based on different themes and the order of the questions asked were varied from interviews to interviews. The guide was designed to ensure the researcher was covering relevant themes and the researcher has the freedom to phrase the questions differently based on the participants' awareness to the research topic (Berg, 2009). At the same time, the participants are able to freely express their thoughts throughout the process. Thus, the researcher approaches the study from the participants' perspective.

The interview questions were deemed to be open-ended to allow the participants to express their thoughts without restriction and explain their answers in depth where possible. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed new questions to be asked during the process, whether through spontaneously initiated by the participants or the researcher and follow up questions were also scheduled in the interview process to allow for comprehensive findings and it allowed the researcher to analysed the data more throughout and therefore applying inductive approach to the research topic. Hence interview process allow the researcher broaden the scope of study.

The researcher decided to apply a combination of phone interview, face-to-face interview and video interview for this study. This is mainly due to geographical areas and time constraints issues. It was identified during the interview invitation process that many working mothers did not have

time for face-to-face interview after work and they preferred to stay at home with their children during the weekends. Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury (2012) found participants are more likely to ask for clarification of the questions and the interviews are tending to be shorter during phone interviews. Therefore, the researcher organized the interviews in order of preference with face-to-face interview then video interview and lastly phone interview if the other two options are not viable for the participants. This was done with the purpose to maintain high quality engagement with the participants as well as to avoid the possibility of distraction during phone interviews, which Irvine *et al.*, (2012) identified in their study.

Additionally, observation of the participants' non-verbal communication was also noted throughout the process, this includes participants' behaviour and tone of language used during the interview. Interview process is essentially an interactive method.

4.7.2 Research sample

The participants were identified based on the appropriateness, which derived from the fact that they are working mothers. The researcher has chose non-probability sampling because the aim of the study is not to uncover causal mechanism; it is instead to obtain individuals testimony. The choice of specific research tool depends not only on the practical issues of timing and resources, the research objectives are taken into consideration as well (Tansey, 2007). It is also argued that non-probability sampling should only be used when the resources are limited, which in this exploratory study, the researcher found there were limited resources linking workplace fun to working mothers. The aim of the interview was to collect detailed qualitative data not to get a representative population of the working mothers.

The researcher applied snowball-sampling method, once a participant was selected; the researcher asked the participant to recommend other

participants who were also working mothers. This method was effective because the researcher was able to identify relevant participants who share similar characteristics as working mothers.

The participants of this study were all female with children ranging from 2-22 of age. The participants were selected from working in different industries, both private and public sectors. The researcher did not put a limitation in selecting mothers based on their age as this was thought to be irrelevant to the study. Lamm and Meeks (2009) had identify that age and generations had an impact on workplace fun however the aim of this study was to further examine workplace fun in the context of working mothers, the researcher therefore invited working mothers of different age groups.

4.7.3 Pilot Study

Many researchers have claimed the advantages of pilot study as enhancing the success rate of the research and to assess the research procedures where necessary, the researcher can make changes before conducting interview and data analysis in the main study (Brooks, Reed and Savage, 2016). Furthermore pilot study has the advantage to highlight the questions that are useful for this study as well as increasing the researcher confidence in conducting pilot studies (Williams-McBean, 2019).

For this reason, the researcher conducted a pilot study and the feedback from the participant was to rephrase some questions to avoid positive or negative bias. One question was removed due to duplicate question and four questions were rephrased to avoid researcher bias. The researcher also found the interviews could be more effective if the questions were re-arranged by themes. The interview took 45 minutes and this was within the targeted time frame, thus the target of 30 minutes to 45 minutes remained reasonable.

4.8 Data Analysis

The social constructionism nature of this research indicates that meaning is found through social interpretation of people. Saunders et al. (2016) argued analysis within a qualitative research is much more complex and elastic than quantitative research because meanings are expressed through words and expressions of the participants. There is no standardized method to analyse qualitative data and in fact a variety of approaches can be carried out (Alshenqeeti, H., 2014).

The theory approach of this research is an important factor of how the researcher analyse the data. The inductive approach of this research meant that the researcher did not have a clearly defined theoretical framework prior the commencement of this research, therefore the researcher has chosen a commonly used data analysis method of quantitative research - thematic approach to interpret data of this study. Saunders *et al.* (2016) pointed out that inductive approach allow data collection process to be flexible because of the interactive nature of the data collection process to explore different themes and patterns. Thematic approach is therefore suitable because it is flexible yet systematic to comprehend small or large qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The basis of this method lies within “the core value it underpins and unites the observations” (Braun and Clarke, 2018) and how the researcher interprets the data is the essence of this method, and this echoes the value of interpretative epistemology where the researcher is the key actor of the research. De Santis and Ugarriza (2000) explain that themes are mostly implicit and it requires the researcher to “hunt and seek” for additional patterns and observations to identify what the underlying theme is and the repetitive occurrence activities in interviews allow the researcher to perform categorizing and hence conceptualize the study.

The researcher performed data analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006) six phases of thematic analysis by transcribing the data and followed by coding and reviewing the data multiple times. One potential

challenge for the researcher may encounter in the process is the ability to recognise a convincing theme under the circumstances where the researcher might not be able to collect adequate data. This is in line with the criticism of reliability and validity towards interview as a method of research, where it is often being criticised as a bias method. Nevertheless, the researcher recognised thematic analysis as an important approach to contextual knowledge, and by keeping each conversation intact with codes, the researcher can compare each set of interview accounts and identify the overarching themes of the investigated phenomenon.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Saunders et al. (2016, pp. 226) refer ethics as 'the standard of behaviour that guide your conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it'. With the rising use of social research to gain understanding of society and realities, brings forward the concern for ethical issues in the conduct of research involving humans. There is a fear of social research may bring limitations to individuals freedom such as invasion of privacy and human behaviour (Kelman, 1972; Alshenqeeti, 2014). One argument for this is the 'power deficiency of the subject' explained by Kelman (1972), that once a person agrees to be the participant of the experiment, he automatically subjected himself to the control of the investigator. Whereas if the research is carried out in an environment owned by the participants, Kelman (1972) argued that the investigator's control is far less in this situation, hence creating a balance of power between the investigator and the participants.

Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher obtained approval of research project from the ethics committee of National College of Ireland. Once the participants were selected, the researcher sent out a consent form (appendix 1) and research information sheet (appendix 2) to the participants to ensure all participants were informed

with the purpose of the study and all the required information including that the interviews would be recorded. This was carried out to ensure the study is in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

For this study, the researcher was well aware of the difficulties of inviting a working mother due to the hectic schedules they have. The researcher therefore cannot force the participants for interview at unreasonable hours for ethical reason as well as to ensure the data collected were at good quality. The participants were also allowed to withdraw from the interview at any stage of process with no consequences.

In the reporting of the data, the researcher also removed the names of the participants and any information that may give clues to identify the participants' identities and the organizations they are working in. Additionally, all information of the interview were stored in a password protected laptop and folder.

4.10 Limitations of Research Design

This research was limited for several reasons. The main reason being workplace fun is a relatively new subject of research in the field of organization behaviour and there are very limited research between workplace fun and working mothers. Many researchers like Lamm and Meeks (2009) and Georganta and Montgomery (2018) recommended exploratory research to be carried out in order to understand the meanings of workplace fun where Lamm and Meeks (2009) specifically mentioned parental status as a factor to be considered for study.

Furthermore as the study was subjective in nature with the choice of qualitative-inductive method, the study may be scrutinised for representational generalization. The participants of this study were mainly working mothers who work in office environment, therefore to what extent can the findings of this study transfer across to populations of other working environments and how true they are account for is an

aspect to be considered. These arguments are based on the fact that the sample size for this study is not statistically representative. Along with this issue, the concepts of reliability and validity could be argued as a limitation however the researcher has established that it is inappropriate to evaluate qualitative research as they do not resonance the aims and values of interpretative epistemology.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the findings of analysis of six semi-structured interviews. The chapter is organized by participants' profiles and common themes emerged from interviews and literature review using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher first transcribed all the collected data and organized the transcript through words frequency by using NVivo. This allows the researcher to explore the common themes across the participants. Quotations from the participants are used as supportive evidence to illustrate the themes and to provide clear narrative accounts of the participants.

5.2 Participants Profiles

The six participants are presented as anonymous in below (table 2) for confidentiality. They are given a code from P1 to P6.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Participant's Age	42	29	39	57	40	34
No. Of Children	1	1	1	2	2	2
Children's Age	9	7	9	20, 25	5,7	2,4
Sector	Private	Private	Private	Public	Public	Private
Location	Singapore	Ireland	Ireland	United Kingdom	Ireland	Ireland
Nationality	Singaporean	Thai	Croatian	Malaysian	German	German

Table 2: Participants profile

5.3 NVivo and Word Frequency

To identify the most frequently used words in the interviews, the researcher selected NVivo as the qualitative data analysis software. This tool allows the researcher to interpret the open-ended responses of the participant by visualizing the most frequently used words in the interviews. The most frequently appearing words can be used to interpret the participants' attitudes to the research topic. Visualization of data is useful as it allows people to understand the interrelationship of the words to the research topic more easily through illustrations

Figure 7 is a word cloud of most frequent used words generated by NVivo for this study. From the word cloud, it is visible that “fun, stress, family, workplace activities and organize” are the words that are used most frequent, however it is also noticeable that some words such as “children” and “kids” share the same meaning and this prone the researcher to analyse the transcript with more attention.

The most frequently used words according to word cloud are fun and stress. This reflects the questions asked by the researcher. The word “activities” is related to “fun” where many participants responded with “activities” when asked if they have any understanding of workplace fun. Although all of the participants have never heard of the term “workplace fun” but they all had the same understanding when the researcher asked the participants to dissect the term into “workplace” and “fun”. This result strengthens previous researchers’ definition of workplace fun, and although the participants are not aware of the term but they understood the concept of workplace fun and related it to “activities” and “colleagues” in their organization.

The word “family”, “children”, “kids” are of the same category where the participants describe about their family life. These terms are linked with “organize” where many of the participants mentioned the need to plan in advance if they are to participate activities that are held outside of working hours because of family commitment.

P5: ‘I do but it stills means i have to plan in advance’.

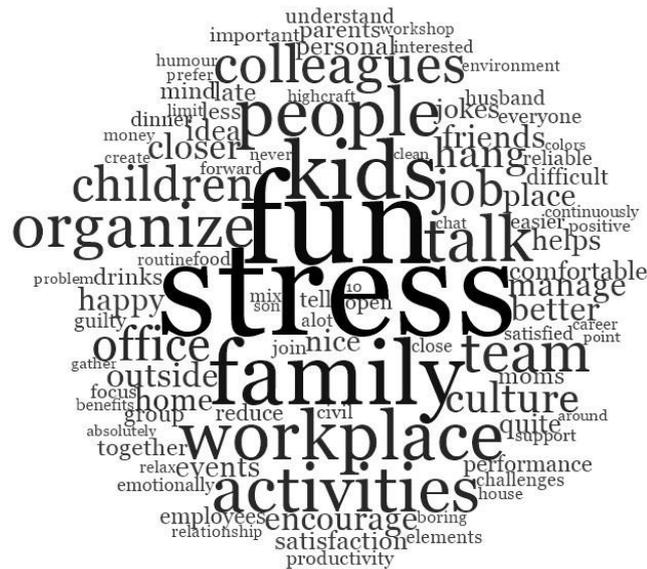


Figure 7 NVivo word cloud

5.4 Emerging Themes

The researcher identifies the common themes found across all participants after examining the transcripts. The first three themes explore working mothers experience of workplace fun and how it can reflect the existing literature (research question one and two) and the last two themes explore the challenges of working mothers when experiencing workplace fun (research question three and four).

The themes are as follow:

(i.) *Culture*

– Sub-theme: motherhood, company culture and colleagues interaction

As the participants are all from different nationality backgrounds, it is very clear that culture takes a big part in affecting their experience of workplace fun in their respective company. This is especially for P1 and P6 where they mentioned their ethnic background do not match their company culture and therefore affecting their interaction with some of their colleagues. In terms of motherhood, P6 spent seven years in India and she is married to an Indian, therefore she experienced differences

in motherhood based on culture. P2 mentioned culture is the reason why she enjoys workplace fun in her organization.

(ii.) *Personality*

P1, P2, P4 and P6 show personality is a factor to their workplace fun experience. The personality of P1 does not match the company culture she is in. P4 does not like to socialise with other colleagues after working hour and she likes to keep things to herself. Both P2 and P6 do not enjoy activities involving drinking and food and they prefer activities that create meanings and learning opportunities.

(iii.) *Food*

P1, P2, P5 and P6 mentioned their workplace fun activities involved food, usually involving team lunch or team dinner. All of them enjoy this except for P6.

(iv.) *Stress*

The theme of responsibility can be applied to all of the participants. Everyone mentioned their role of mother has changed their way of socializing with their colleagues after they gave birth. P3's child's medical condition of autism led her to be in a more stressful environment than other working mothers. The participants' source of stress comes mostly from family where they have to plan things in advance with their children in mind. However, P6 strong personality reveals to be the key driver of her stress that is impacting her family and work. P4's source of stress is from work because her responsibilities towards her children are not as much as the other participants because her children are older.

(v.) Guilt

Guilt can be observed in P1, P5 and P6. The participants revealed their guilt when they participate social events after working hours. They all appeared to feel guilty when their children are at home. However, P2 does not feel guilty when her child is at home and P4's children are young adults, her focus is not on her children as much as P1, P5 and P6.

5.5 Culture

The main theme of culture in workplace fun relates to the nationality and cultural background of the participants and the location of the company. Among the participants, three were of western background and the other three were of Asian background.

5.5.1 Motherhood

Culture influences motherhood where P6 mentioned that although she is German but her 7 years living in India has impacted her attitude towards motherhood:

P6: 'I spent 7 years in India, very strong on mother sacrificing and i think in general in Asia it's very strong on both sacrificing.'

However, to what extent is true the statement of P6 is worth exploring. From the interviews with other participants of Western background, there was no difference in terms of mothers sacrificing. All of the participants show the same attitude towards sacrificing for their children. To determine Asian mothers sacrifice more than Western mothers, there is a need to include fathers in the research to weight who sacrifice more for their children. Perhaps then, the differences can be found out and how both parents treat workplace fun can be another area to explore.

5.5.2 Company Culture

Culture has an impact on employees' attitudes to workplace where P6 mentioned the culture in Ireland is more relax as compared to the German people who are mostly serious, and she also compared her current company and previous company's culture based on location.

P6: 'Maybe it would be very different if work in Germany where people are mostly serious, it could be within Ireland, people are more serious and laid back so you have potentially more fun.'

P6: 'I used to work in a company with HQ is in NY... and [current company] is based in California so i can tell the big difference ... previous company unthinkable that the senior executives would crack jokes...'

Likewise, P1 mentioned her company is headquarter in Japan and the culture is very serious:

P1: 'A very serious place...there is no fun, punctuality is a must in a Japanese company.'

These viewpoints reflect the results of many surveys done on workplace where a lot of these features American companies such as Google, Salesforce and Airbnb with high rankings. These organizations are often known for their positive and fun organization culture. The surveys are influential in the way that they are published through social media channels such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor where many young graduates and job seekers visit when they are searching for their next career step.

Comments by P6 and P1 are critical to the other side of these rankings that perhaps the reason behind why some companies are more fun is due to cultural background of the employees and where the organization is situated.

Despite Tews *et al.*, (2012) research showed high correlation between workplace fun and applicant attractions, their research sample consisted of a dominant 77% Caucasian. If this research was to have a different sample, the results might be different. Hence, job seekers must carefully interpret these surveys whether if the company fun culture is actually reflecting the society culture they are in or the company itself. If the company culture in Japan is serious and not so fun, then perhaps it is worth to evaluate whether multinational company like Google in Japan is the same as other Japanese companies. These responses from participants suggest culture is a factor to consider when it comes to workplace fun.

5.5.3 Colleagues Interaction

There is strong argument that workplace fun improves employees' relationship with each other, where researchers found it helps to build friendship through enjoyable working environment. One participant thinks culture is an element of workplace fun she enjoys:

P1: 'The way we chat because we are mixing culture here, not just one, we have everyone, we don't stick to one culture, so understand other culture, learns something new, like food night, this is Thai, this is Turkish... there is no limit'

However, P4 experienced the opposite where cultural differences had created a barrier for her to communicate with her colleagues of different background. For her, colleagues who shared similar background were easier to communicate with, and in her case it is the minorities in her organization. To a certain extent, this could be interpreting as being segregated due to cultural differences and hence affecting her experience of workplace fun.

P4: ' I think its our culture, i hang out with minorities more...Maybe because i didn't do my education here, things they say like their humour.... its hard (to understand), scare to offend them and don't

understand what they say, maybe because its family, but i think its culture.'

P1 highlighted that the differences in cultural background influence organization citizenship behavior where she asserted that western society has clearer boundary of work and friendship, whereas in the eastern society, relationship¹ can be different.

P1: 'I think European and American culture, they can really draw a line where work means work, friendship means friendship. But here, it tends to mix so people tend to have personal emotion... they can be very demanding, they just want it their way so no room for negotiations.'

Contrary to expectations, she finds it to be difficult to trust her colleagues whom she is close with or even easier to work with. Her experience is significantly differing to Karl *et al.* (2005) study that workplace fun is positively related to trust. However it is aligning with the study by Tews *et al.* (2014) that fun could lead to decrease in productivity and performances with the difference being P1 is reflecting the negative effect of workplace fun on relationship whereas Tews *et al.* (2014) suggested the employees are having too much fun.

5.6 Personality

The personalities of the participants affect their workplace fun experience significantly. Three participants showed strong personalities (P1, P4 and p6) in their experience of workplace fun. From the interview, P1 shows that she is a very lively person with her constant giggles and she shared that her colleagues would gather at her place for chats. As her workplace is very serious and do not encourage workplace fun, her personality came off as very opposite to the culture of the company.

¹ Relationship or Guanxi, this refers to the personal trust and the power of social networks in the Chinese culture. It is built on the belief of interdependent and social exchanges based on relationship. Whereas the western society is transactional, and contribution is the key in organization and feelings are usually not a consideration in decision making.

P1: 'They will all gather at my place, and we joke a bit but we do it discretely'

By contrast P6 appeared to have the opposite personality of P1 where in the interview with her, her overall tone was very serious and her negative view of workplace fun is reflected. This also reiterates the stereotype of German working ethics where P6 mentioned that she would like to be engaged and gets ahead of things before everyone else.

P6: "Workplace fun doesn't sound mature, sounds like use for children activities".

P6: 'My priority is not necessary having fun, i would rather take more money and take less fun... you can have joke, a little bit, doesn't have to be everyday'.

P2 revealed that she likes to keep things to herself when asked if she is close to any of the mothers at work.

P2: Well not really, after work, usually i don't hang out with them, i like to keep things to myself since i see them every day, no need to build closer relationship.

The personality of the participants is indeed impacting the participants' experience of workplace fun. Although P6 does not enjoy the social events with her colleagues, she found satisfaction in her work through her way of enjoying workplace fun. Interestingly, P6 found that corporate social responsibility (Brand Purpose) as her way of experiencing fun and running events for charity is her way to de-stress and her source to satisfaction. Her motherhood instinct also led her to focus on charities that are towards children.

P6: 'It gives me a lot of happiness, fun in my day to day, even though my work sucks even if everything goes wrong, i always enjoy brand purpose... that is very very enjoyable and makes me happy'.

P6: 'I really enjoy this and i know they will be children by the end of this will get craft supplies and toys and it makes me happy'.

P6's experience is consistent with the results described in literature. It confirms the relationship between workplace fun and work satisfaction. However, P1 does not think workplace fun brings them satisfaction despite her positive personality, her satisfaction come from her work performance which to an extent is reflecting her ambitious personality. P6 has similar ambitious personality when she emphasized she does care about her job title.

P6: 'it give me satisfaction, there's no benchmark, there no achievement, I'm a community champion because they ask me to be one which is a compliment, i do get my quarterly award when they think i done well.'

P6 experience has strengthened a study by Napora, Andruszkiewicz and Basinska (2018) that her high level of enjoyment and fulfillment in Brand Purpose gives her high level of job satisfaction and it improves her mood at work.

The various personality of the participants underlines Karl *et al.*, 2007 study of the relationship between personality and workplace fun where the study found respondent who have positive attitudes to workplace fun were reported to have experienced more workplace fun. Although P6 does not enjoy the common perception of workplace fun however she does have high level of satisfaction coming from Brand Purpose. It can also be interpreted that motherhood has changed P6 personality in searching for meaning, where she expressed that she is more conscious of meaning since she became a parent. The

5.7 Food and Drinks

As expected to be consistent with literatures, this study shows food as one of the most common activities to be considered as fun by employees. Four out of six participants reported to have involved food related activities in their workplace. P1 especially expressed the fun element in workplace for her is the differences in culture and food is one way to show the differences. P1 also highlighted food as the main topic of conversation among her colleagues. Interestingly her motherhood instinct is shown through this where she would discuss about grocery shopping with her colleagues who are mothers. This underlines the common challenges of working mothers, where they understand each other's struggles and life.

P1: ' We talk about food, we all like to eat.. which supermarket is having sales, they will share with me certain type of food is better...but of course we don't talk about diapers and baby milk formula, we talk about certain brands of noodles are better...'

Despite this the popularity of food as workplace fun activities, both P2 and P6 prefer to participate in activities that do not involve drinking and it seems that they do not enjoy activities involving alcohol, and P6 further suggests that she does not enjoy food activity too. It can also be interpreted that P6 is an introvert who does not like to socialize with her colleagues too much. Nevertheless, her statement reflects her organization also involved food as way of workplace fun.

P2: 'Sometimes you can enjoy during the day as well doesn't have to be just drinking'.

P6: 'I'm not keen on sports and social, i know we have drinking activities and i know there is a business camp BBQ downstairs but this is not really fun for me, i actually need the meaning part of it'.

5.8 Stress

5.8.1 Source of stress

There is no consensus as to what is the source of stress among the participants, whether it is family or work. P1, P2, P4 and P6 experience most of their stress from work while P3 and P5 source of stress is from family. This result contradicts a study by Napora *et al.* (2018) that the joy of raising children distracts mothers from problems at work. In fact the work stress of P1 and P6 has an impact on family.

P1: 'When i need to travel, the stress is there. If i don't make facetime call, he may think that my mum has forgotten about me.'

P6: 'i think that the stress that i project on my work always come and triggers down to my family as well, obviously even when i'm off, i still think a lot about the work stuffs.'

Whereas for P3 and P5 their source of stress is coming from child minding, especially if they have decided to participate in social events with their colleagues after work.

P5: 'something happened to the kids, that's stress, where i have to organize something else like back up child care'

The most remarkable finding to emerge from the data is that perhaps the age of children is reason behind why working mothers are experiencing high level of stress. P2 and P4 both discussed their colleagues with younger children are experiencing more stress than they are.

P2: 'She just gave birth and she's back to work, you can see a lot of stress in her.'

P4: ' Maybe because my children are old, no need to take care of them much. If they are younger than yes, different.'

5.8.2 Stress and workplace fun

Literature has shown the positive linkage between workplace fun and stress. For mothers, this is important because they experience high level of stress due to their multiple juggling roles. All of the participants agree workplace fun is reducing stress and it helps with mood balancing. However P1, P2 and P5 emphasize that the extent to which workplace fun is reducing stress is limited and positive mind and exercising are the keys to reducing stress in their opinion.

P1: 'Once outside of office we stop discussing about work, we talk about other things, we joke, sometimes it's very good to de-stress... once quiet down, the stress comes back.'

5.9 Guilt

Guilt is a common factor among participants when the researcher asked why do they not participate in social events with their colleagues after work.

P5: 'Even if its planned, i don't feel like i want to because i feel guilty...i feel i should really collecting them because its been a long week for them too.'

P6: 'There is also that guilt, are your kids seeing enough of you.'

As a result of this, participants are not able to participate after work social events as much as they would like. Except for P2 where she stated that she does not feel guilty when her child is at home. She justified this by explaining to her child the situation as well that she would do some activities with her child that day to comfort her and avoid guilt. P1 has similar attitude in expecting her child to understand the situation. Both participants deploy the method of explaining the situation to their child, which is very different to other participants.

P2: ' If i plan to go out i will do something with my daughter during the day like bring her to cinema or out shopping in town, and explain that

not everywhere children can go which my Farah does understand when i go out without her... i don't feel guilty cause she understands.'

It is interesting to note that P1 and P2 are both from Eastern background and referring back to the comment made by P6 where she suggested that Asian mothers sacrifice more, it seems that this situation does not apply to P1 and P2 where both participants aim to strike a balance between work and family, and workplace fun is acting as a method to release stress for them.

Additionally, P6 also reinforces that her guilt would be reduced if her workplace gives the opportunity to allow her to bring her kid to work. Among all the participants, only P5's organization has activities involving children. This number is very low and all of the participants agree and would like to their organization to involve more workplace fun activities involving children based on the reason that their children are at the age of asking questions and they thought it would be very insightful for their children to get to know their parents' work.

P1: 'I would say Farah would like to know as well because at her age she wonders many things why and what...'

The interviews have shown that P3 and P6 are very disappointed towards their organizations in terms of incorporating family into workplace fun. They felt that their organizations are purposely excluding family in the organization fun activities. This shows that organizations could do a lot more in accommodating this.

P3: 'Company should really advertise and they do activities, they say no kids, that is frustrating.'

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter is structured into three parts. The first part revisits the proposed research questions, followed by a conclusion with research objectives in mind. The last chapter concludes with the research limitations and recommendations for future research.

6.1 Research Questions Revisited:

R.Q. 1: How effective is workplace fun activities designed to increase satisfaction, work performance and reduce stress of working mothers?

Base on the above analysis, it appears that working mothers are finding workplace fun to be as beneficial, especially in terms of productivity and stress reducing. However not all participants are finding work performance increased due to workplace fun, and there seems to be no link for the participants. This perhaps is may be due to the differences in culture. P1 has in fact suggesting that workplace fun has a negative impact on her work performance. The differences in culture has led it difficult to explore how effective is workplace fun as some cultures do not have workplace fun to begins with.

Research question 2: What are the main changes of a working mother's attitudes towards workplace fun as a result of becoming a parent?

The main attitude change in a working mother after becoming a parent is the increased in her sense of responsibility. She is more aware of her children's need and her responsibility towards her children.

Prior becoming a mother, she has the freedom of participating in social activities with her colleagues after working hours, and by contrast, her life is circling around her family. Even if a working mother is

participating in workplace fun events after work, she would have a sense of guilt for not being with her children. Evidence suggests this happens when the mother is at work too.

Research question 3: What are the workplace fun elements do working mothers like to enjoy and are there available in their respective organizations?

The question of what types of workplace fun elements do working mothers enjoy is very subjective to some extent. From the interviews, it is noticeable that participants have very different interest and personalities. Therefore the type of fun they enjoy is significantly different where some enjoy food while some enjoy art and crafts. These activities are usually not involving their children and P6 referred her workplace fun elements as 'me time'. It is also appeared that working mothers prefer activities that are within their working hours so that it does not interfere with their family time.

However this study has found that working mothers would love to have their children involving in workplace fun activities. It is discovered that the participants would like to have their children to understand the work they do, this could be because when children are at younger age, their tend to ask many questions. Despite having many working mother in the workforce, it appeared that it is still not a common phenomenon in organization to have children or family included in workplace fun activities.

Research question 4: How often do working mothers attend workplace fun activities and how is it affecting their family life?

It appears that working mothers do not necessarily have the time to attend workplace fun activities after work, even if they have the intention to participate. In fact many of them are experiencing guilt along when they are enjoying workplace fun due to the nurturing nature of the

mother, they have put their children before themselves, making sure they are being taken care of before attending any social events.

There is strong findings that mothers are having a lot of stress when it comes to striking the balance between work and family, especially for mothers with younger children or children with medical condition. The age of the children can be interpreted as the determining factor of family stress for working mothers.

6.2 Conclusion of the study

The purpose of this study is to conduct an in depth understanding of workplace fun through working mothers. This study has shown that despite the positive outcomes that workplace fun brings, working mothers are not enjoying it to the fullest as compare to their colleagues who do not have children.

A significant amount of studies have claim the benefits of workplace fun, however many of it context are focusing on the general employees. This study has found that working mothers are not necessarily enjoying workplace fun due to the family responsibility they have. Referring back to psychological contract, working mothers are expecting or would like to have more from company, due to dual income family is becoming the norm, The expectation is for companies to incorporate family, workplace fun can be a solution to this.

It is also discovered that working mothers are experiencing high level of stress and base on previous research, workplace fun can act as stress release mechanism. In this study, working mothers are enjoying the type of activities they like base on their personal preference, and it is found that they are enjoying and releasing their stress through it. Base on this, it is vital for organizations to incorporate workplace fun into their the employee's routine. As workplace is moving towards humane rather than machinery, management should reconsider the design of

workplace fun for an inclusive environment. If the outcomes of workplace fun are as positive as literature, perhaps organizations could take the opportunity to incorporate more family fun activities to reduce the guilt of working mothers. The psychological contract is perfect to demonstrate this situation. If the mother does not feel guilty over being away from her child; she does not have to worry about her child, then she can spend more time to focus on her work, and this potentially could increase productivity. Work satisfaction could improved too if she is positive about her work and family.

6.3 Recommendation

Base on findings, several recommendations are thought to be valuable for future research in this topic. As culture is a main factor to the experience of workplace fun by the participants, it is recommended that future research to explore the different workplace locations of the same company. The difference in cultural backgrounds could potentially have an effect on the personalities of the employees.

Additionally, further research could explore workplace fun in the working father context to determine if there are any differences. The findings have identified workplace fun is a way for working mothers to release stress, research could be done on fathers to find out if it has any effect too.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form 1

Participant Consent Form

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview, which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in dissertation of the interviewer.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a password-protected file and the supervisor of the researcher may request access to them until exam board confirms the result of the dissertation is released.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years after the result of dissertation is released.
- I understand that under Data Protection legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Appendix 2: Information Sheet 12

WORKPLACE FUN IN THE CONTEXT OF WORKING MOTHERS

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

I am a MSc. International Business student at National College of Ireland. This interview is a core part of my study on the topic of workplace fun. The aim of this study is to enrich the literature in terms of the contexture behaviour in organization by exploring the context of workplace fun through the lens of working mothers.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

The interview is about your role as a working mother and how has workplace fun impact your work at your organization and your role as a mother at home.

The interview will be audio-recorded for analysing purpose. It will be roughly 30-40 minutes in the form of phone conversation or face-to-face conversation.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been selected for this interview because the study aims to explore workplace fun from a mother perspective.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

This interview is completely voluntary and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequences.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

Workplace fun is a relatively new topic of interest in organizational behavior field. Many organizations have reported to gain benefits such as employees' work satisfaction and productivity boost from workplace fun. However to what extent is workplace fun benefits organization is still debatable and there are very little empirical research in this area. This study is an attempt to fill the gap in existing theory by exploring workplace fun in the context of working mothers. Through enriching the existing literature, organizations gain benefit and develop better organization environment for its employees.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

The interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced upon request. The transcript will be analysed by research investigator and access to the interview transcript will be limited to the research investigator and the supervisor as part of the research process. Any summary of the interview content or direct quotations from the

interview, which are made available through academic publication, will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified.

If the research investigator has strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed, he/ she might have to break confidentiality.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a password-protected file until after result of dissertation is released. A transcript of interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under Data Protection legalisation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

This final research product will be submitted as dissertation and may be used for conferences, publications and teaching use.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Provide the name, affiliation and contact details of all researchers involved as well as

For further information, please contact:

Jqiao Wei Chen, x17110807@student.ncirl.ie

Rachel Doherty, rachel.doherty@ncirl.ie (Supervisor)

Appendix 3: Interview Guide 1

Workplace fun definitions

1. Have you heard of workplace fun before and what is it in your opinion?
2. Does your organization encourage workplace fun?
3. What are the fun elements at work in your opinion? Who generated them? Among employees or by organization?
4. If organized by employer, how often are these activities? In workplace or outside of workplace?
5. How often do you participate these events?
6. What type of workplace fun you enjoy?

Relationship with colleagues whom she has fun with.

7. Do you find closer with the colleagues whom you have fun with?
8. Do you find it helpful/ easier to work with this employee who you regularly have fun with? Why?
9. Do you find these people you have fun with more reliable? (Organization citizen behavior)

Stress

10. Does she find having fun/ jokes release stress?
11. If yes, what is the source of stress? Family or work?
12. If not, do you find stressful at all?
13. Happy and satisfied people have less stress, more rewarding, is it true in her

Outside of working hour fun

14. How does you organize her time between family and work? Does she work from home? (and create stress)
15. Do you have workplace fun that is outside of working hours and how regular do you attend these? And why?
16. Do you have weekend activities involving family organized by your organization? i.e. Family Fun Day

Job satisfaction

17. Do you find workplace fun have a positive impact on job satisfaction? And how so?
18. Do you find stress reduces your productivity and performance and therefore workplace fun is helpful to reduce stress?
19. What type of organization they work in? Person – Organization value?
20. Are there any disadvantages of workplace fun in your opinion?

Mothers

21. Are there any activities in her workplace that are benefit for mothers?
22. Does she hang out with her employees after work and are they parent too?
23. Do she find workplace fun improves her mood at work? And does it help her to be positive?
24. How does she feel about workplace fun before and after having kids? What are the big changes? Does she find it more difficult to enjoy workplace fun? or does it have an impact at all?