



**An Exploratory Study of the Career  
Expectations of Male and Female  
Millennial Human Resource  
Management Students.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research study focuses on the career expectations of millennial human resource management students while exploring the expectations of both male and female students. The study explores literature on the millennial generation, work-life balance, and gender. The study uses a qualitative approach through interviewing 4 male and 6 female participants. The themes that emerged are career progression and development, work-life balance, pay and success & family. The results of the study suggest that the students have similar career expectations and their gender is not a significant influence on their career expectations, however there are similar and different opinions amongst the participants. Recommendations were made based on the results.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## **Rationale for this Study**

The Millennial generation will soon make up the biggest part of the workforce (PWC, 2011). Millennials will be joining the workforce with other generations including Baby Boomers born between (1946 – 1964) and Generation X born between (1965 – 1980) (Wood, 2019). According to the Irish Universities Association (2020), Ireland has shifted and is becoming a highly skilled and educated population in recent years (Irish Universities Association, 2020). Millennials are the most educated generation in comparison to previous generations. Many of this generation are currently in the workforce and are highly educated with either Bachelor or master's degrees. According to the National College of Ireland (2017) 89% of the MA in Human Resource graduates in 2017 were in employment six months after graduation. The results of the survey indicate majority of the graduates have job titles such as human resources administrator or recruitment consultant roles as well as other related roles (NCI, 2017).

Gender roles are related to beta and alpha careers according to Sullivan and Mainero (2007). Women tend to hold family-life considerations, personal opportunities for development and a pleasant working environment as higher priorities compared to men (Sullivan and Mainero, 2007). Beta careers tend to be mainly followed by women as they are more oriented on finding a balance with work being a secondary priority according to Sullivan and Mainero (2007). Their careers are more likely to involve compromises and adjustments while they find a balance between their relationships and their careers as well (Sullivan and Mainero, 2007). While men traditionally were breadwinners which meant that career advancement was a high priority and career success was held to be more important than relationships which were focused on after finding workplace success (Schweitzer, Ng, Lyons and Kuron, 2011). Alpha careers are work-focused and are more likely to be pursued by men (Sullivan and Mainero, 2007). These have



less of a focus on family. This suggests that these differences may affect the career expectations of males and females and that gender differences may influence career priorities (Schweitzer et al., 2011).

This study will focus on male and female master's students who are undertaking the master's in human resource management in the 2019/2020 academic year. This thesis will examine the students that are from the millennial generation and focus on what they expect from work as educated millennials. This study will be valuable as it will focus on their workplace expectations as millennials, and it will also be valuable for Human Resource practitioners working in Ireland as this generation are the future of the workforce, and according to Saucer and Sims (2012) their values will influence future ways of working. These young workers are in employment with other older generations. The integration of millennials into the workforce with older workers may cause issues if the company isn't able to manage alternating attitudes and expectations (Pyöriä et al., 2017). This study should give a valuable insight into the expectations of this category of workers as they will become the future of the workforce (PWC, 2011). This would help organizations prepare for the needs of these employees.

### **Aim of this Study**

This study aims to find out the career expectations of postgraduate human resource management students who are from the millennial generation. This would be insightful for the management of these employees in the future and offer an insight into the Millennial generation in Ireland. This study is important to employers and human resources professionals as it gives information and insight into the significance of the career expectations of educated Millennials. Organizations need to be aware of their needs and what they need to work on to make sure the Millennial generation are satisfied in the workplace which will help them to be retained (Waikar, Sweet and Morgan, 2016). This research is important as it would provide an

opportunity for organizations to learn where developments are needed to meet the needs of the Millennial generation.

This qualitative study is aimed at answering the research question, and research objectives. There appears to be limited research regarding the work orientation of millennials (Giancola, 2006). This study aims to add to the current literature due to fact there is limited research. Through using interviews, and collecting information from millennial participants, this study aims to find out from an Irish context if the millennial generation (born between 1980 and 2000) expectations are different between males and females and to explore the career expectations of these millennial students.

## **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is laid out into six chapters.

Chapter one focuses on the introduction and rationale for the study.

Chapter two focuses on the literature review which reviews, summarises, and evaluates academic research carried out on Millennials and gender differences.

Chapter three covers the methodology chapter which focuses on the chosen methods used to investigate the area which is a qualitative approach using interviews. The methods and design are justified. This section includes the population and participants of the study. This chapter includes a description of the methods used, how the data was collected, organized and analysed. Ethical considerations are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter four details the findings that emerged from the methods used in the study. This focuses on the themes which emerged from the analysis. Limitations which emerged during this research process are also included.

Chapter five reviews the research study and discusses the findings.

Chapter six draws conclusions from the findings and gives recommendations. The implications of the research are discussed, and a learning statement is included which focuses on the main learning points of the research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter includes the literature that will be reviewed to provide insight into the study. Generational theory and the characteristics of millennials will be provided to give a background of the area. The literature will be used to give an insight into the values held by millennials. Areas that are discussed include millennial characteristics, leisure/ work life- balance, workplace expectations and gender and the workplace. This will present up to date knowledge on Millennials expectations in the workforce.

### **Millennials and Generational Theory**

Howe and Strauss (2000) developed a theory of generational repetition. The hypothesis of their theory holds that each generation moves in 20-year periods (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The influences that occur within these developments are called turnings. This theory involves each generation having fundamental characteristics (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The current generations that are apparent in the workforce include Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Social generation involves a cohort of individuals that are born in the same in the same range of time (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Although a cohort doesn't necessarily mean the same as a generation through the defining factor of age on its own (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Within sociological terms a generation involves both people who are born within a certain time frame and these people also have similar sociocultural experiences (Eyerman & Turner, 1998).

#### **How is a Generation Formed?**

Manheim (1952) says there are three stages of the formation of generation. Firstly, there is being a member of the same age group. Along with bring in the same age group there must be a shared social and cultural aspect amongst the group (Manheim, 1952). Secondly, youth is viewed as a period for growing generational awareness. Experiences that are shared among the

people in cohorts provides shared unity among a certain cohort and separated generations. Thirdly, individuals from a cohort are drawn together to follow a shared way of life (Manheim, 1952). Manheim's (1952) concept is difficult to use to define the Millennial generation. Young people are said to be culturally autotomized (Pyöriä et al., 2017). There has been a failure from social movements to be able to unite a common interest among young people (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Different to Manheim's (1952) concepts, modern academics do not view this mobilization as key in influencing generational divisions (France & Roberts, 2015). Many academics refer to a generation as a group of people have a shared experience and are aware of the uniqueness of their shared age cohort (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Generational differences can be explained through the shared experiences of group members (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014).

### **Millennial Characteristics**

There has been a range of literature regarding various cut off points which regard those as millennials according to Mhatre and Conger (2011). But for this study those considered as Millennials are those born between 1980 and 2000 (Johnson and Lopez, 2008). This means that the 'Millennials' in this study consist of those from both Gen Y and Gen Z. Although it consists of mainly Gen Y. Gen Y consists of individuals who are born between 1980 and 1995, while Gen Z consists of people who are born between 1995 and 2010 (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós and Juhász, 2016). Millennials hold attitudes and beliefs that are different than previous generations (Bencsik et al., 2016).

Millennials can adapt to change more quickly when compared to other generations (Bencsik et al., 2016). There is a shared cultural element amongst millennials, with this being towards diversity. Millennials accept change and diversity and are quite tolerable of these aspects. They accept changes easily and cultural differences and seek enjoyment (Bencsik et al., 2016). A range of aspects are considered as factors that 'define' this specific generation. Alsop (2008) found that Millennials had a range of job characteristics. They are technologically savvy with

good teamwork and multitasking skills. Millennials are born into the world of technology and have a positive attitude towards using technology. They are known as the digital generation. This generation are said to be the expert generation regarding digital knowledge. They want flexibility in the workplace, praise, and quick career acceleration (promotions). It is also noted that Millennials may have a strong sense of entitlement (Saucer and Sims, 2012). This translates into working life through a desire for feedback and a work life balance (Saucer and Sims, 2012).

Millennials have unique characteristics which include their ability to multitask (Alsop, 2008). This generation tends to hold expectations and priorities for being successful, having a career and money (Pyöriä et al., 2017). The millennial generation tend to want career growth and development. This cohort tend to be career conscious and move if their needs are not being met in an organization (Merchant, 2010). They value their development in the workplace and opportunities to use their initiative (McDonald and Hite, 2008). Millennials also tend to job hop (McDonald and Hite, 2008). When career progression is not available for Millennials, they tend to seek other employment (Kwan, Neveras, Schwartz, Pelster, Erikson and Szpaichler, 2011). They prefer employers that have a culture of meritocracy (Saucer and Sims, 2012). They want to advance quickly. They want training and coaching to advance and develop their skills in the workplace. They are capable of change and are short-term planners. The attitudes of this young generation suggest there are differences among work values as the cohort matures (Willie, Hofmans, Feys, and De Fruyt, 2014).

## **Millennials are Different from Other Generations**

### **Work Orientation and Millennials**

Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt (1968) developed the concept of work orientation. This refers to the meaning of work in relation to a person's life course (Goldthorpe et al., 1968). There are different forms of work orientation. Firstly, there is the instrumental orientation which views work as a main source of gaining income (Pyöriäl et al., 2017). Secondly, there is a bureaucratic orientation which values career development (Pyöriäl et al., 2017). Thirdly, there is a solidarity orientation which emphasizes community in the workplace (Pyöriäl et al., 2017). This research is relatable to generational studies. The comparison of work orientational attitudes and other values (leisure, family) are useful in understanding life paths and work choices and influences (Pyöriäl et al., 2017). The economic growth that occurred after 2008 after the recession is influential regarding millennial characters and the values they hold towards work (Saucer and Sims, 2012). Millennials have been exposed to a range of historical, cultural, economic, and cultural changes while growing up. This has influenced their attitudes and values which they then/ or will bring into the workplace (Saucer and Sims, 2012). They bring their unique perspectives with them which may even cause tension with older work members (Saucer and Sims, 2012).

### **Generations in the Workforce**

Wood (2019) carried out a study. This article looks at the mindset and work values of millennial workers and how this adds to a balanced multigenerational workforce. This study sheds light on the characteristics of millennials. They acknowledge praise and gratitude for their work. There are differences when compared to older generations. Baby boomers are people born between 1946 and 1964 (Haynes, 2011). These people have seen the world change quickly with a change from industrial work to mostly office-based work (Haynes, 2011). They are said to have a good work ethic, and like teamwork. They value communication and being involved

in decision making (Haynes, 2011). However, Generation X has an alternative approach to the workplace. They are born between 1965 and 1980 (Haynes, 2011). They prefer to be self-reliant and to be individual (Haynes, 2011). They question things in the workplace (Haynes, 2011). Millennials are becoming more predominant in the workforce. For Gen Y there is said to be a lack of focus on traditional values in their lives unlike previous generations, such as family (Bencsik et al., 2016). Motivation tends to be drawn from their need for advancement and success in the workplace. Here it is money that is used to influence them. They also value their free time and tend to make decisions based on these needs. Most of this generation are already in the workforce. They work alongside other generations, especially people from generation X.

### **Cultural Differences**

Within the workplace, it consists of several generations. This means that employees will be from various cultural and geographical backgrounds and might not have the same associated generational characteristics as each other (Knight, 2009). Hofstede (1984) developed a theory which focuses on cultural dimensions. His study on culture shows the effects of a society's culture on their values, and how this relates to behaviour (Hofstede, 1984). Millennials may have cultural differences. This means it might be difficult to strategize for them in a multicultural workplace (Schewe, Debevec, Madden, Diamond, Parment and Murphy, 2013). This cohort may be influenced by their generation, but their social and cultural circumstances need to also be considered (Schewe et al., 2013). Just because someone is a millennial, does not mean they will hold the same values/beliefs as another Millennial.

Cultural beliefs vary among people and countries (Hofstede, 1984). For example, in China there is much more emphasis on familial ties, in comparison to Ireland (Hofstede, 1984). There are differences within millennial attitudes depending on different societies. Whereas cultures that are more like each other will also have similar cultural values (Hofstede, 1984). This suggests it is helpful for this research to be specifically based on a certain culture. In this case



it is based upon Irish millennials. There may be a feeling of being labelled or boxed in through the use of placing people as part of a generational group, although it might be comforting for some (Knight, 2009). Recognizing that generational differences do exist can offer a positive impact, but there may be difficulty if individual generations 'blame' previous or outcoming generations for these differences (Knight, 2009). Organizations need to be able to keep up an maintain their multigenerational and multicultural workplaces.

# **Work-Life Balance**

## **What is a Work-Life Balance?**

Work-life balance policies are often included in organizations which can help employees have flexible working options. Human resources strategies in organizations can encourage these practices which would encourage younger employees that are seeking more of a work life balance (Kultalahti and Viitala, 2015). This might include “homeworking, part-time working, compressed working weeks, annualized hours, job sharing and term-time” (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017:512). Among these activities' other opportunities such as career breaks or activities like allowing employees opportunities to respond to a domestic crisis also allows employees have a balance in their working and non-working duties (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017). Millennials are said to place more value towards family and leisure rather than wage employment (Twenge and Campbell, 2012).

## **Work/Life Balance and Millennials**

Research indicates that having a healthy work-life balance for Millennials is highly important to them (PWC, 2011). A study carried out on Millennial PWC employees found that 95% of the young workers found work/life balance is important to them (PWC, 2011). They tend to seek a balance between their personal and their professional life (PWC, 2011). Srivastava and Banerjee’s (2016) study focuses on the motivational factors that influence millennials. This focuses on values and beliefs of young workers which highlights their desire for a work-life balance. Hoffman (2018) carried out research on the reasons why millennials quit their job. Hoffman (2018) found they are focusing on pursuing other opportunities and their need for meaning in their work. Some literature points towards work being less important or on par with the personal life of young workers (Lu and Gursoy, 2016). But this statement is also disagreed with by De Hauw and De Vos (2010) as he believes that these young workers have a strong work ethic which is due to the expectations they hold surrounding career development which

in return influenced them in a positive way in the workplace. Without an adequate balance in their lives, millennials do not remain satisfied in their employment situation and may seek employment elsewhere that will support their out of work needs (Waikar, Sweet and Morgan, 2016). What is notable for Millennials is their demand from organizations to provide opportunities for flexibility for a satisfactory work life balance (Saucer and Sims, 2012).

### **Work/Life Balance and Attracting Millennials**

Work-life balance involves employers acknowledging the importance of satisfying the needs of employees through the provision of a satisfying equilibrium amongst work and non-work activities (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017). Millennials in the workplace tend to value collaboration, want meaningful work, a work-life balance and flexibility, seek to build their capabilities, want frequent feedback regarding their performance and want to grow in their career (Croner-I, 2020). It is important that organizations give their attention to the work-life balance expectations of their workers. Employers need to provide satisfaction for young employees so that they will have positive work life in line with their personal lives. Providing this balance has been proved as being useful for organizations since employees will remain in organizations longer if they have opportunities to gain flexible working conditions (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017). These activities help to lower employee absence and to manage the issues of low morale and stress that can happen due to the lack of an appropriate work-life balance (Saucer and Sims, 2012). These activities can help manage retention.

Another aspect that needs to be highlighted is that once Millennials have completed their education and entered the workforce employers are not satisfied with their changing work ethic among the generation according to DeChane (2017). According to McCrindle (2007) millennials are less dedicated in comparison to the previous generations. McCrindle (2007) believes millennials seek income to live their lives. This refers to idea that “do not live to work, but they rather work to live” (McCrindle, 2007:4). It is important that Millennial differences

are understood by employers to develop ways of attracting and retaining them. The demand from Millennials for organizations to provide flexibility and a work-life balance have raises concerns for companies. It is a growing challenge that Human Resources must deal with as there is a growing number of Millennials participating in the workforce (Saucers and Sims, 2012). Numbers are increasing throughout, which means flexibility needs to be offered to retain talented Millennials for as long as possible.

## **Millennial Career/ Job Expectations**

Pinzaru, Vatamanescu, Mitan, Savulescu, Vitelar, Noagea and Balan's (2016) study found that Millennials are "motivated by recognition, public acknowledgment, instant and frequent positive feedback and gratification" (Pinzaru *et al.*, 2016, p.174) Within the workplace millennials are motivated by advancing themselves and gaining success, while family stays in the background (Bencsik, Horvath and Timea, 2016). It is also said that millennials tend to have less commitment to one employer and seek opportunities for growth and lifelong learning and employment (Broadbridge, Maxwell, & Ogden, 2007).

### **Boundary Less and Protean Careers and Human Resource Management**

Today, there is more of a tendency for millennials to move from the once traditional employment conditions to other approaches. The different approaches to be discussed include boundary less and protean careers. There are differences amongst the two approaches. Firstly, the boundary less career is understood by Arthur and Rousseau (1996) as the traditional model of employment in which workers focus and work in one certain career area.

Within Human Resource Management, there is a tendency for graduates to begin their careers as a human resources administrator (NCI, 2017) In a generalist human resources career it may take the following form as shown in the table below.

Job title	Dublin €	Regional €
HR Director	95 – 155k	95 – 150k
HR Manager/HR Business Partner	55 – 75k	50 – 75k
Senior HR Manager/Senior HR Business Partner	75 – 100k	70 – 95k
HR Advisor	45 – 60k	40 – 50k
HR Generalist/HR Officer	40 – 50k	36 – 48k
HR Administrator	30 – 40k	27 – 35k
HR Graduate	24 – 28k	22 – 25k (IrishJobs, 2020)

Although there are other areas graduates may enter from learning and development, talent acquisition and much more (IrishJobs, 2020).

Whereas Protean careers (Hall, 1996) focus on individuals mapping their careers and encourages certain values. The values that influence these careers include continuous learning and opportunities for self-development (Korsakiene and Smaliukiene, 2014). Freedom and growth are also important values (Korsakiene and Smaliukiene, 2014). For millennials there is a tendency for their careers to be very individualistic (Van Der Sluis and Poell, 2003). They seek opportunities for development and learning to advance themselves and their careers (Van Der Sluis and Powell, 2003). Career self-management includes being able to look over on your career expectations and to be clear about what someone would like to achieve in their career and acknowledge the skills and actions that are needed to be successful in your career and accomplish career goals (Bezuidenhout, 2011). It also implies that a person has the confidence and determination to be involved in their development while also following their career goals (Bezuidenhout, 2011).

## **Millennials in the Workplace**

Millennials seek employment in organizations that give career development and career paths to their employees (Ismail and Shein Lu, 2014). Companies are giving learning and development opportunities to their employees to retain them (Egan, Yang and Barlett, 2004). Development tends to be quite important for millennials. They want to get as much from an organization as possible. This theory from Aruna and Anitha (2015) focuses on millennials putting in what they get out of an organization. Providing this support and help to workers careers offered both value to the company and the worker which helps the company to meet their aims and goals. Young workers are more drawn to organizations that provide learning opportunities which will help their careers (Ismail and Shein Lu, 2014). Learning and development is changing in nature and evolving which means that it needs to be up to speed to meet the needs of the company (CIPD, 2015).

## **Importance for Organisations**

Millennials are different from previous generations. Coates (2017) carried out a study which focuses on how generation Y perceive their experiences of work. Generation Y are seeking meaningful work which related to the literature on the values of Generation Y. This focuses on the meanings associated with work from Generation Y. Millennials work to live, rather than living to work (Saeed, Muslim, Rahim, Rasli, Ghani and Redzuan, 2018). Older generations have more of a living to work belief, which is contrasting to the values of Millennials. Millennials tend to stay in an organization while getting the most out of their role as possible, and when they reach this point of gaining experience, they move on to other organizations. This means it is important for organizations to try and retain Millennials and give them opportunities or else they will leave earlier which shows the importance of researching this area (Waikar, Sweet and Morgan, 2016).

There is increasing competition for organisations to hire and retain the most talented employees in their companies, this refers to the ‘war for talent’ which is quite the reality for the Millennial generation (Michaels, Handfield – Jones and Axelrod, 2001). Talented millennials will be keener towards gaining employment in organizations that support corporate social responsibility in comparison to the older owner driven orientated mindset (McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011). Organizations like these tend to offer better opportunities for workers to develop themselves. It has been said by Pyöriä et al (2017:2) “that we do not yet know whether the values of the Millennials really are as different as has been suggested”.

Some recruiters argue that Millennials tend to be cynical regarding large organizations. This is an issue as there appears to be a ‘disconnect’ between this generation of workers and mainstream workers (Knight, 2009). Millennials tend not to trust companies, and in return companies have trouble connecting with millennials. Millennials have become cynical regarding companies trying to manipulate them which means that the traditional advertisements are not as effective (Nimon, 2007). This means that the management of generation succession is a serious issue which recruiters and employers must deal with. This influences the perceived employability of students and workers of this generation (Knight, 2009). Companies need more than just strategies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) to be an employer of choice. They need to do more to attract millennials to their organization. CSR as an element of an organisations culture can be much more helpful for them to attract younger workers according to Ohlrich (2015). Millennials seek employment in companies that are in line with their values.



## **Gender**

### **Millennials and gender barriers in the Workforce**

Millennials tend to value diversity and want an employer that has a good record regarding equality and diversity. But these workplace expectations are not always met for millennials (PWC, 2011). 55% of millennial employees agree that organisations talk about diversity, but the opportunities are not actually equal for all, according to a PWC study on millennial workers (2011). The perception of gender bias in the workplace is an issue for female millennials (PWC, 2011). According to PWC (2011) male millennials are more likely than females to believe their employers were treating them equally. With 46% of men feeling that their employer was getting it right in terms of equality, which compared to only 36% of women agreeing the same (PWC, 2011). More female employees (29%) believed employers were too biased to men regarding internal promotions, which compared to 16% of men who believed there was a female bias. Millennial men are more likely to believe they can succeed compared to millennial women (PWC, 2011). 56% of millennials that were questioned said they were optimistic they could rise to the most senior level of their current organisation, but when this is looked at from a gendered perspective the results show that 61% of men believed they could reach the top while only 51% of women believed the same (PWC, 2011).

The glass ceiling metaphor has been used to describe the invisible barriers that women face in the workforce (Davies-Netzley, 1998) These barriers are used to prevent many women in the workplace from gaining the top positions in organisations. The removal of these barriers is important to help increase the participation of women in the workforce, and to gain these positions. This is the aim of gender equality policies, yet the glass ceiling is still persistent. In Ireland, women are continuing to perform better than men in second and third level education (Central Statistics Office, 2019). While the 2017/2018 academic year in Ireland had a higher rate of women participating than men (57% to 43%) (Higher Education Authority, 2018).

Women still face significant shortfalls in the labour market (Brewster, Mayrhofer and Farndale, 2018). The labour market is gendered, and there are issues around HRM policies being biased. Cohen and Huffman, (2007) carried out a discussion on how the glass ceiling is formed. It was due to factors such as discrimination, educational choice, life cycle explanations and cohort effects (Cohen and Huffman, 2007). These aspects can have a negative impact on women in the workforce as they can affect their career choices, expectations, and development.

### **Women in Management**

There is a strong argument for the encouraging and increasing the number of women in senior management, executive committees, and boards (IBEC, 2018). This would be helpful for many reasons including increased profits and earnings, more creativity and innovation and governance (IBEC, 2018). Data from IBEC (2018) shows the progress that has been made in Human Resource Management in Ireland from 2001 to 2018. This is important for continued progress regarding women in management. The data shows that there is an important pipeline of female talent in Ireland within human resource management, and that there are increased numbers of females at upper management levels within human resource management in 2018, when compared with 2001 (IBEC, 2018)

### **Female Participation in Human Resource Management**

The gender pay gap may be contributed to through the reinforcement of gender stereotypes through men and women accessing certain jobs. Human Resource management is an occupation that is dominated by females in Ireland (horizontal segregation) (IBEC, 2018). While there is also evidence which shows there is a lower proportion of female employees working at each successive layer of senior management (vertical segregation) (IBEC, 2018). The concentration of females in HR, and the lack of females in higher levels of responsibility provides an insight into gender differences in HR in Ireland. It is essential that career opportunities are equal among both men and women. At a junior level, female management in

human resources went from 80% in 2001 to 79% in 2018 (IBEC, 2018) Although this is a small decrease, the more opportunities there are for women at junior level will see improvements over time at more senior levels (IBEC, 2018). Human resources in Ireland is quite gendered towards females at mid-level career level. With figures changing from 61% IN 2001 to 80% in 2018 (IBEC, 2018). But women might be less inclined to change jobs because of family commitments. Although this is beginning to change, with women slowly driving their career development into more senior roles and more men are entering human resources. In 2018, there was an increase in women at bring the head of HR function. This rose from 53% in 2001 to 72% in 2018 (IBEC, 2018) This shows that there is an active pipeline of talent coming from lower management levels. There is also an increase in female CEO's, with one in seven CEO's in Ireland in 2018 being female (IBEC, 2018). This shows that more must be done at the top level to even the gender imbalance.

### **Theory on Gender and Critiques**

Pearson's gender centred theory was promoted by Horner (1972). This perspective holds that women have different traits than men. These include having a fear of success, being less willing to rake risks and a lack of executive skills. While men are argued to have attributes that are more suitable for managerial positions. These include being more aggressive, competitive, and having greater self-confidence and independence. It is argued that through socialisation, females gain these certain attributes which makes them less suitable to be managers and lessen their chances of becoming managers compared to men (Fagenson, 1990). It has also been suggested that through socialisation women prioritise their families and personal lives more than their careers, and that this is not suitable for management roles when compared to men (Fagenson, 1990).

The gendered centred theory has shortfalls. It does not explain why there is such a lack of women in management positions. When women are as qualified as men, there is still slow

movement for women in companies into positions of management (Cleveland, Stockdale, & Murphy, 2013). On a global scale women experience issues when aiming for leadership positions. These include “double burden, confidence, and a disadvantage from perceptions and stereotypes” (Kebede, 2017:248). The double burden refers to the fact that women still tend to be responsible for doing more home chores and care giving in comparison to men. Although they are improving their professional opportunities, women still do twice as many household tasks (Curtis, Schmid and Struber, 2012).

Ely and Padavic (2007) found that other studies have shown that other factors like confidence might explain the contrasts between men and women. Those who referred to the gendered centred approach may have ignored that these other factors like confidence might be gendered as well. This involves the belief they hold in their own abilities, along with their capability of communicating with confidence (Kebede, 2017). Women in contrast to men are likely to apply for a position if they have all of the outlined criteria such as the experience and qualifications required, but men are much more likely to apply if they have 60% of the requirement (McKinsey, 2007). Women tend to underestimate their suitability for roles, while men tend to overestimate their suitability.

Another criticism is that this approach does not consider the organisational and societal factors that constrain women from entering top management positions (Benson and Yukongdi, 2006). The gendered approach assumes that all women are the same, and this encourages stereotyped beliefs regarding what their abilities are. This provides men with reasons for not giving management positions to females, and also encourages the idea that those who have made it to these positions as extraordinary and gives the idea that this was obtained because of their luck, potential and/or drive. Also, this approach does not consider organisational factors that restrain females from career progression as it is focused on individual women managers.

## **Human Resource Management Policies and Gender**

HR recruiting policies and gender role beliefs can be influential in making career and work-life choices. Qualified men and women tend to apply for jobs based on their gender role beliefs according to Brewster et al., (2018). As an example, females are less likely to apply for a consultancy role in comparison to men due to the lack of perception around a work-life balance (Brewster et al., 2018). This mean that even if there are policies in place, they will not be helpful unless they combat these gender-based perceptions (Brewster et al., 2018). Research indicates that managers still see women as being less promotable, having a poorer performance and inferior 'job fit' due to women having more conflicts than men regarding family-work conflicts (Duehr and Bono, 2006).

Lommerud, Stramune and Vagstad (2015) carried out research which asked if self-fulfilling expectations would help towards more hiring and promotion for women in the workforce. The results found that there are discriminatory outcomes as women are less likely than men to be put into fast track jobs. This suggests that changing the self-fulfilment expectations would help to combat gender inequality. The use of quotas has been suggested as a way of progress (Brewster et al., 2018). In traditional terms women are far less represented on boards than men (Brewster et al., 2018). Although many countries have gender quotas under their legislation, Ireland has not gone this far (Brewster et al., 2018). In Ireland, however, it is necessary for organisations to report on their gender diversity recruitment efforts and their board gender and diversity efforts (Brewster et al., 2018). This is encouraged through a comply or explain principal (Brewster et al, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Using literature, generational research was discussed to examine if there are different attitudes regarding wage employment amongst millennials, and if gender is influential in the career expectations of millennial human resource management students. The main focus of the research is to understand the career expectations of educated human resource management millennials that are set to enter the workforce, and if gender roles is a significant influence of their expectations.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses upon the research methods that were involved in this study. This chapter will focus on the research philosophy, research approach, research methods, interviews, the sample and ethical considerations. These methods are useful to provide a deeper insight into the expectations of the students.

### **Research Question**

Firstly, the research objectives are an important part of this chapter and were developed in accordance with the literature review. The focus of the research is to understand the career expectations of educated millennials and if their gender is a significant influence upon their expectations. The objectives were formed based on the aims of understanding what millennials expect from the workforce. It is necessary to understand what expectations they hold in the workforce, and if these expectations are ‘gendered’, or if they are significantly shared among men and women? Based on the research question, three research objectives will be assessed in this study. The research objectives of this study include the following.

**Research Objective 1:** To develop an in-dept understanding of career expectations of millennial students undertaking the master’s in human resource management.

**Research Objective 2:** To analyse if postgraduate students in human resource management differ in terms of expectations for the workforce (work/life balance, flexibility)?

**Research Objective 3:** To analyse if career expectations such as work/life balance and career focus vary or are similar among the millennial cohort due to gender (male and female postgraduate human resource management students) and if so, in what ways?

## **Link with Literature Review**

Chapter two was the literature review chapter which defined what millennial are, their characteristics and information about gender issues in human resources. The literature brought to light that while millennials tend to value a career around a work-life balance, there may be differences among millennials due to their gender. There is limited data on the career expectations of master's in human resource management students who are millennials and if their expectations are influenced by their gender. This is why the study involves human resource management students as it is a career that should allow for a level of career flexibility and it allows for a comparison to be made across male and female students on their career expectations. The research addresses the important gap in the literature. The methods used by the researcher to address the research objectives are set out in this chapter, with considered rationale given for the chosen methods.

## **What is Research**

Research is the collection and interpretation of information with the aim of finding answers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012) Research is used to investigate an issue and to find answers. Saunders et al (2012) believes it is important that the research process is systematic. It is about identifying a problem and collecting information about that problem through asking the right people the right things. Through engaging in the study, the researcher uncovers information relevant to the study regarding the career expectations of human resource management students and gains a clearer understanding of the issues that influences the expectations of the participants.

## **Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy refers to the development of knowledge and the nature of that specific knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016). The three kinds of research assumptions are outlined by Saunders et al (2016) they include ontology which refers to the nature of reality. It involves



two areas which are objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism in relation to research refers to social entities being present and that these are independent of social factors (Saunders et al., 2016). This approach is unsuitable for this study as it would ignore the meanings gained from the participants and would not be suitable for this study as the perceptions of the participants are significant for this study. Subjectivism differs as it suggests that the perceptions and actions of social factors are helpful in defining social phenomena (Saunders et al., 2016). The most suitable mode is subjectivism as this study deals with the perceptions that participants have regarding their career expectations. This is suitable as it focuses on the student's personal career expectations. This approach is more focused on meaning which is suitable for this study. Next is, epistemology which is an area of philosophy where the main focus is on knowledge and how it is produced (Quinlan, 2011). Epistemology is the acceptable, legitimate and communication of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016). Axiology relates to the ethical values of the research process. In research philosophy there are three main strands which aim to gain comprehension of the nature of reality (Quinlan, 2011). They are positivist, social constructivism and interpretivism (Quinlan, 2011). Epistemology is divided into positivism and interpretivism. The process that was carried out involves significant decisions on what were the best methods to use.

### **Positivist**

The positivist paradigm to studies is used to propose a strategy that will a theory is used to establish a hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2012). This approach is focused on what constitutes acceptable knowledge. This type of research is carried out in an objective singular manner (Quinlan et al, 2015). This kind of research is the suitable studies that want results to be objective and generalizable. A positivist approach is useful for a structured approach which would mean a quantitative method of research (Saunders et al, 2016). This approach would not

allow for detailed information to be obtained from participants, which is why it is unsuitable for this study.

### **Interpretivist**

The interpretivist paradigm is used to gain an understanding of knowledge that relates to how people interpret the world and how they act based on their interpretations (Hammersley, 2013). With this approach there is more openness to new ideas and opinions. This paradigm uses a relativist ontology as a single phenomenon can have a range of interpretations instead of just a single truth that is measured by a process like the positivist approach. This approach involves data being gathered that is socially constructed rather than being tested by a theory and hypothesis which the positivist approach does. There is a focus on observing behaviour rather than focusing on the causes and effects (Neuman, 2000). This approach is more suitable for carrying out qualitative research.

### **Most Suitable Paradigm**

The interpretivist ontology is the most suitable paradigm for this study. This is the chosen approach by the researcher. A qualitative approach is appropriate in this case as there is limited research carried out in this area and a qualitative approach allows for detailed information to be gained. The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the career expectations of millennial human resource management students. This approach seeks to gain a deeper and richer understanding of a phenomenon, and this is what this study aimed to do. It is focused on the complexity in its unique context rather than generalising the whole population like the positivist approach does (Creswell, 2007) This approach allows for not only describing the expectations, but to understand them in a social context. There is more flexibility in this approach, and it is more personal as it is focused on gaining meanings from interactions (Black, 2006). This is a study of perception, and phenomenology is an area within interpretivism that is the study of the lived experience from a first-hand perspective. This is the most suitable to

explore the opinions of the millennial students through using a qualitative approach (Quinlan et al., 2015).

### **Research Approach**

To carry out research there are two available options the researcher can pick to follow. These are a deductive approach or an inductive approach. These two approaches are different from each other (Chambliss and Schutt, 2016). Both options will be discussed, and reasons given for the chosen approach.

### **Deductive and Inductive**

A deductive study is where the hypothesis is based on a theory (Quinlan, 2011). This research is carried out in which a specific expectation is deduced from a general premise and then is tested (Quinlan, 2011). An inductive approach is different from a deductive approach. An inductive approach begins with specific data, which is then used to develop a theory (Chambliss and Schutt, 2016). The aim of this research study is to understand the career expectations of millennials. This study is an inductive study as this is the most useful as this research is exploring the phenomena. The literature review will provide a basis on which information surrounding the area is discussed. This approach allows for a deeper understanding and focus on the issue. Data obtained from interviews help to allow for themes to emerge based in the different views and information's that comes to light in the interview process (Saunders et al., 2016).

### **Exploratory Approach**

This study takes the form through an exploratory approach as it focuses on the expectations of a population. This approach is the most suitable for this study as the information was analysed from the population and focuses on their behaviour, thoughts, and experiences rather than finding solutions to issues. Schweitzer et al., (2011) carried out a study on career expectations

and priorities on 23,413 male and female students through using surveys allowed for gathering data from a large population. While this research gains a deeper insight into the career expectations of a smaller population and allows for more of a focus on the specific information gained from participants.

### **Research Methods/ Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

An important decision for the researcher to consider is the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. It is important to use the right strategy to reach the aims of the research. Both methods are different research strategies. Quantitative research involves a systematic process that uses numerical (Burns & Grove, 2005). Qualitative research is different than quantitative research. Qualitative research involves studying things in their natural settings and is focused on interpreting phenomenon in relation to the meanings that people bring to them (Burns & Grove, 2005). A simpler way to explain the two would be that quantitative research is mostly associated with numbers while qualitative research deals with words. The options for carrying out research are to choose between following either a quantitative or qualitative approach or the two together. This means this is between a mono method or a mixed method approach. For this study, a mono method approach is used following a qualitative approach, as it is the most suitable approach to use for this study as it allows for detailed data to be obtained from participants.

### **Rationale of Research Approach**

For the purpose of this research, the researcher will take a qualitative approach. According to Chambliss and Schutt (2016) qualitative research usually begins with an exploratory research question. This is the case for this study as it aims to explore the career expectations of millennials. According to Quinlan (2011) this approach presents data that represents feelings, thoughts, understandings, and ideas. A qualitative approach is the chosen approach as it will be the most appropriate and suitable for the study of the career expectations of postgraduate

human resource management students as it allows for detailed information to be gained from the participants. The chosen methodology can facilitate the accomplishment of the aims of the study and the completion of the study which is why it is the most appropriate approach (Quinlan, 2011). According to Quinlan (2011) it is important to pick the appropriate method in relation to what is needed to be accomplished from the research. The research seeks to understand the phenomenon which is why a qualitative approach is necessary.

### **Interviews**

An interview is a purposeful conversation between two or more individuals on a certain topic (Kahn and Cannell, 1957) An interview consists of a discussion between two or more individuals where the researcher asks questions, and the interviewee responds. Interviews allowed for the collection of data from the target population and the engagement of the participants in the interview process (Quinlan, 2011). This is the most suitable as unstudied attitudes cannot be properly understood with a structured set of questions or within a highly controlled experiment (Chambliss and Schutt, 2016). This allowed for themes to emerge based on the information gathered from the participants. This allowed for specific areas to be focused on (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Interviews allowed for an open one on one conversation between the researcher and the individual participant and allowed for information to be collected without interruptions from other participants which may have occurred if focus groups were used instead which would include multiple participants. Interviews were the most suitable as it allowed for the collection of data without interruptions.

### **Linking the Purpose of the Research to the Research Strategy**

There are a range of different sources of data collection that can be used through a qualitative approach to research (Saunders et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews are under the category of non-standardized interview methods. This approach allows for data to be gathered and analysed qualitatively and to gain an understanding of the 'what' and 'how', and to explore the

‘why’ as well (Saunders et al., 2011). The research objectives seek to explore what the career expectations are of the students are, and ‘how’ and ‘why’ their expectations are similar or different focusing on their gender.

### **Semi - Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used and followed the inductive approach. Interviews are useful for research as they give data that is valid and reliable which is suitable for the study (Saunders et al., 2012). Interviews that are semi-structured are a common approach as they allowed for questions based on themes to be asked in a conversational setting. The semi-structured interviews that were carried out are unstandardized as each interview varied from each other. The interviews were flexible (Bryman and Bell, 2007). An interview schedule was used which had a list of specific questions that were asked (Dawson, 2009). This was to ensure continuity (Dawson, 2009). Some interviewees had already answered questions in other sections, which meant there was no need to later repeat the same question and answer. This meant that the structure in which questions were asked changed in accordance with what the interviewee had answered. Some interviewees that were going off topic were given extra questions in order for their responses to remain relevant to the study.

### **One to One Interviews**

A one to one approach was used by the researcher. This meant that the interviews involved the researcher/interviewer and one interview. A one to one approach to the semi-structured interviews was the best option for the research as it helped to find insight into the research. This interviewing approach allowed for two-way communication and allowed the researcher to ask further questions when appropriate to gain more data. Pyoria et al., (2016) as previously mentioned in the literature review section carried out research which used surveys to gather opinions from millennials on their work expectations. In the case of that study it was useful to gain information from many participants. But in this case, a smaller number of participants are

used to gain a deeper insight into their personal thoughts and opinions on their careers. This study allows for a greater insight into a small number of millennial human resource management students perceptions.

One to one semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain information from the participants in a non-judgmental way. These semi-structured interviews also allowed for in dept and relevant data to be drawn from the participants through asking relevant questions at the right time. A disadvantage to this approach is that the interview might not remain relevant to the study unless the researcher makes sure the conversation is guided properly by them to avoid the interviewees going off topic. It is important that the researcher avoided their potential ability to be bias while carrying out interviews. This would change finding and affect the conclusions of the research. As the researcher is also a millennial masters student studying human resource management the researcher must ensure they remain unbiased. Generally, interviews lack generalizations as they tend to use a small sample, and this is the case in this study which had ten participants. Therefore, it cannot be said that the entire population would have the same perceptions as the chosen sample. Also, validity might be an issue too for the research as it cannot be confirmed if the data gained is true and fair. As the interviews are one on one these interview methods might be less protective for the participants in terms of their privacy and anonymity in comparison to other methods like surveys. These are ethical considerations which are mentioned in more detail below.

### **Online**

The interviews that were carried out were all done so online through Microsoft teams. This was mainly due to the current social distancing restrictions in place from the Irish government due to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, this approach was quite convenient for both the researcher and the participants. Microsoft teams allowed for the participants to be visually observed and allowed a level of rapport which would not have been as easily built from a

telephone call without the visual aspect. Microsoft teams was also useful for recording the interview process between the researcher and the interviewee. Recording of the session began once permission was gained from the participant and they were fully aware of the confidentiality of the interview process and that the information they were giving the researcher would be anonymous.

### **Interview Structure**

The questions formed for the interview process were formed on the information laid out in the literature review. Extra questions that were asked by the researcher were done so to gain more information and richer/ deeper data. The questions all related to the overall aim of the study which is to gain an understanding of the career expectations of millennial postgraduate human resource management students due to enter the workforce. It was decided by the researcher that the interviews would involve a semi-structured one on one interview. The interview process involved the researcher having a list of key questions and topics that were used to guide the interviewer in asking questions relevant to the study. The questions that were used in the interview for each one on one exchange were used for the purpose of providing in dept answers which were open-ended. Open-ended questions were the most suitable and useful as they allowed the researcher to gain a large amount of detail from participants and also allowed the researcher to ask to follow up questions on areas that were of particular importance for the study. The main areas that were focused on in the interview process were on career expectations. The interview questions are in the appendix section, they are in appendix C.

### **Interview Setting**

The interviews were conducted via Microsoft teams. This was suitable for all participants. The online platform allowed for a confidential interview to be conducted in a setting which was useful as there was a quite undisturbed and interrupted flow to the interviews which allowed for a positive rapport and flow of information.



## **Pilot Study**

One pilot interview was carried out. A pilot interview can be beneficial to help determine the time and costs that might be a part of the studies along with predicting issues that might occur in the actual interview process with the participants. The setting of the interviews was online, so it was essential that the pilot study assessed that the internet connection was working to avoid technical difficulty and that the researcher conducted them in an area without interruptions and with the strongest connection. The pilot interview allowed the researcher to estimate how long the rest of the interviews would take with each participant. This allowed the researcher to inform the participants of the estimated length of time of the interview process. According to Quinlan (2011) carrying out a pilot study allows for issues to be dealt with before undertaking the real research study. The questions used in the pilot were altered slightly after carrying out the pilot test to allow the participants to understand more clearly what they were being asked. Some questions required more clarity and prompts to allow for a greater detailed response.

## **Research Design**

This involves a cross sectional design as the data will be collected from one point in time (Chambliss and Schutt, 2016). This is the most suitable type of research design for the researcher to carry out as it has to be completed within a timeframe which wouldn't allow for a longitudinal design which would allow for follow up with the participants over a period of time.

## **Sample Selection/ Population**

Sampling is the selection of a subset from the entire population. Within this the choices are either probability or non-probability sampling (Chambliss and Schutt, 2016). The researcher chose to undertake non-probability sampling, this meant the sample of participants was picked on purpose and not randomly. The researcher used convenience sampling. This approach to

sampling meant that the sampling used was accessible to the researcher (Chambliss and Schutt, 2016). The sample were contracted by the researcher for convenience. This approach does not represent the entire population, but it does represent a subset of the population. Although these participants were easily accessible to the researcher as the researcher is a master's student in human resource management, as well as the participants.

### **Participants**

The researchers sample consisted of ten people who are considered 'Millennials'. This means they were born between 1980 and 2000. The year in which they were born is important as the information to be gathered has to be from 'millennial' participants, as the study is based on this cohort and their career expectations as they are the future of the workforce. The students picked were based on the level and subject they were studying. The sample consisted of ten master's students who are completing the master's in human resource management. The students were picked to gain an insight into the career expectations of millennial human resource management students. These participants and their opinions are relevant to the study. These students were picked on purpose to gain an insight into the niche area of human resource management student perceptions, instead of other generalized areas. Male and female students were involved in the research. Six females and four males were interviewed. All the interviews were recorded. The participation of both male and female students was important as the researcher wanted to see if career expectations significantly differed amongst the students.

*Table of Participant Demographics*

Participant 1	Male
Participant 2	Female
Participant 3	Female
Participant 4	Male
Participant 5	Female
Participant 6	Female
Participant 7	Male
Participant 8	Male
Participant 9	Female
Participant 10	Female

### **Initial Contact**

Initial contact with the participants was made via e-mail. This was done to see if the potential participants would be interested in participating in the research study. The students that were interested in participating were then sent a consent form for them to read and inform themselves of the study. The students were required to sign the consent form before beginning the interview process. The consent forms were written by the researcher in line with the ethical standards required of the researcher. The consent forms that were given to each participant are in appendix B. Once the consent forms were completed, the researcher organized a day and time to conduct each individual interview. The researcher ensured the interview day and time was suitable to both the researcher and the participants on an individual basis.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis to develop themes and categories which allowed for understanding of the phenomena under study. In the next chapter which is based on the results of the interview process, the findings arising from analysis are presented. The researcher recorded and later transcribed each interview. The information that was

gathered from the students was analysed to understand the meaning of the information from an inductive approach (Quinlan, 2011). The next chapter will present the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data. The themes were uncovered through coding of the data. Coding means the data was split into conceptual units (Quinlan, 2011). Coding is part of the process of thematic analysis. The coding paths are outlined in the next chapter as evidence of how findings were reached. Themes emerged based on the meanings from the research data. The themes that emerged are related to the literature and will be outlined in chapter five.

## **Research Ethics**

This section will focus on the important ethical considerations that the researcher must consider when they were carrying out the study and acknowledge their responsibility for every participant in the study. All the contributions to the study have been acknowledged and those involved were addressed in a professional manner (Bell, 2005).

## **Informed Consent**

The researcher informed the participants by giving them an online consent sheet before the interview was completed. The researcher informed the participants that they may withdraw from the study throughout all stages of the process. It is important that the consent sheets were signed, and the participants consented and understand their role.

## **Confidentiality and Protection**

The researcher ensured anonymity and confidentiality throughout every stage of the study for the participants. Any information that may identify the participants is not to be published. All information regarding names of participants were changed to protect their privacy and identities. The confidentiality and privacy of the study was ensured through careful consideration on the researcher's part. At every stage of the research the researcher ensured there was data protection. Any information that may make the participants identifiable was

changed to protect their privacy. The research study should not cause harm to the participants or society and did not include any intrusive questions or vulnerable participants. The participants were free to withdraw from the study at any moment they desired. The research undertaken was done through a transparent fashion and did not involve any issues of privileged access (Quinlan 2011).

### **Ethical Standards**

The researcher holds the ethical standards of the study highly and aims to meet the standards of the Research Ethics Committee. For the process of this study including the gathering of information's, negotiating access and engaging with interviewees, the analysis of the information and the sharing of the results, the researcher was careful to follow the necessary guidelines (Collins and Hussey, 2009).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter covered the strategy, the research process, and the collection of research data. The reasoning and suitability of the chosen methods of research has been clarified. The advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods has been outlined. The ethical considerations have also been included. Chapter four in the study will detail the findings that emerged from the methods used in the study.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS FINDINGS/ RESULTS

### Introduction

This chapter will examine the data that was collected from the semi-structured interviews. This chapter will analyse the information gathered from the interview questions. The interviews were targeted at millennial male and female students completing the master's in human resource management. The students were asked various questions regarding their career expectations, work-life balance, and career focus. The semi - structured interview were targeted at students who are from the millennial generation, both male and female. Participants 1, 4, 7 and 8 were male and participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 9 and 10 were female.

*Table of Participant Demographics*

Participant 1	Male
Participant 2	Female
Participant 3	Female
Participant 4	Male
Participant 5	Female
Participant 6	Female
Participant 7	Male
Participant 8	Male
Participant 9	Female
Participant 10	Female

## **Research Aims**

The main aim of the chapter is to present the findings from the interviews that were completed by the researcher with millennial male and female human resource management students. The questions that were included in the interviews were used to meet the aims and objectives of the research project. The included the following

- 1:** To develop an in-depth understanding of career expectations of postgraduate millennial students undertaking the master's in human resource management.
  
- 2:** To analyse if postgraduate students in human resource management differ in terms of expectations for the workforce (work/life balance, flexibility)?
  
- 3:** To analyse if career expectations such as work/life balance and career focus vary or are similar among the millennial cohort due to gender (male and female postgraduate human resource management students) and if so, in what ways?

## **Overview of Interview Findings**

The discussion of information in this chapter will be divided into areas which focus on the research objectives, and the interview findings. An analysis of the interviews presented the career expectations of educated millennial male and female human resource management students. Most of the students shared the same job expectations that they expect in their careers. The themes that emerged were helpful for a researcher to gain a more coherent understanding in answering the research question which was to develop a deep understanding of the career expectations of millennial human resource management students. The 10 interviews with the students allowed for both their similarities and differences to be identified from their responses and to be compared and analysed in the next chapter. Many of the students had similar views and expectations on the questions that were asked. However, the students had different work experience, with some working in HR for several years while others had very little HR

experience and others been just beginning their HR careers. However, the students presented similar expectations.

### **Data Analysis**

Coding and thematic analysis was discussed in the previous chapter. Three rounds of coding were used to analyse the information gathered from the interviews. Round one involves line coding where words/extracts of the text were taken out of each sentence of transcription. Round two involved synthesising and comparing the open codes and organising them into more abstract categories. The final round is where themes were established. Thematic analysis is used to establish the most common themes which were found from the interviews. An example of open coding to theme is the following.

#### **Example 1.**

*Open code: Career goals*

*Participant words: "I'm not really sure what I'll be doing in five years' time, but as long as I'm happy and enjoy my job that's all that real matters to me. I'm very open to learning and developing my skills so ideally, I want an employer that will be able to help me develop my abilities" (Participant 9).*

*Properties: Personal fulfilment, wanting to develop skills, seeking employer understanding*

**~~> Theme: Career Progression and Development.**



The main themes that emerged include the following which have been grouped together to provide a comparison.

They include they are following:

1. *Career Progression and Development,*
2. *Work-Life Balance*
3. *Pay*
4. *Success and Family*

### **First Theme: Career Progression and Development**

The first research objective was to develop an in-dept understanding of career expectations of millennial students undertaking the master's in human resource management. The first five questions asked to the participants were on what their career and job mean to them, their career aspirations and their thoughts of their career paths in HR, along with where they see themselves in the next two, five and ten years. The first theme which emerged based on the answers were career progression and development.

### **What career means to each participant - Meanings**

Each of the participants discussed their own personal career development in the interviews. This was a shared topic amongst the students and was discussed in the interview responses. The participants discussed how they wanted job satisfaction in their careers. Many of the students discussed feelings of being valued and appreciated within their workplace.

*“I definitely want to work somewhere that I enjoy what I do and feel appreciated and rewarded and can develop myself too. I want to work for a company with a good reputation too, so I feel good about the company itself and their values” (Participant 10, Female).*

The students saw career development as being an important aspect of their career expectations. Some participants wanted structured career development, while others wanted more flexible

options for career development. Some wanted structured development opportunities and a clear path involved.

*“If I could work somewhere that I’d be able to follow a path and a structure where I’d be able to move along it and increase my position, I’d be really happy. I would like a career with an employer where I can move up quickly as I get more experience” (Participant 1, Male).*

Some student opinions on flexible careers includes the following.

*“A career to me means spending my life doing something I enjoy. I know that people change careers a lot but I’m looking forward to starting off in HR and exploring the different areas in it so that I can find which one is for me. I want to keep my options open” (Participant 6, Female).*

Some students are open to exploring areas of HR and keeping themselves open to career opportunities.

*“I want to be able to strengthen my skills and work somewhere that I can grow in a company which would then make me more employable to other companies” (Participant 3).*

*“I’d like to develop myself so that I’d be able to get a job in HR anywhere in the world” (Participant 8, Male).*

Being employable to other companies and in other countries abroad was important to many of the participants. Development was discussed by all 10 of the participants.

## **Short term and long term - Goals**

Most of the students have career aspirations and discuss how they want to develop themselves, but only 4 of them had long term plans while the others tended to focus more on the next few years and short-term goals and career plans.

*“I have a graduate job lined up in September so hopefully once I get in with them, I’ll be able to stay with them and work my way up and get promoted when I have more experience”*  
(Participant 4, Male).

*“I don’t have a particular employer in mind but I do have a career path kind of mapped out in my head of where I’d like to go myself, so get a HR administrator role once things are back to normal with COVID and that, get experience and then a HR generalist role and then eventually a HR manager role after five years”* (Participant 5, Female).

Short term orientation included opinions such as the following.

*“I think it’s hard to really say where I’ll be in the next five years of that, like I’m really just thinking of the present and next few years more so than that far ahead. I could end up changing my mind about my career or anything, so it is too far to really know”* (Participant 6).

*“Well I’ve just started working a HR manager which is my most senior role to date so I’m hoping to make the most of my role that I have and then hopefully to work at a more senior HR level”* (Participant 7).

*“I’m not really sure what I’ll be doing in five years’ time, but as long as I’m happy and enjoy my job that’s all that real matters to me. I’m very open to learning and developing my skills so ideally, I want an employer that will be able to help me develop my abilities”* (Participant 9).

Career progression and development are important shared themes for the participants along with their desire to have job satisfaction in their career. While some students were focused on long terms goals, most were focused on short term goals.

## **Second Theme: Work-Life Balance**

The second research objective is to analyse if postgraduate students in human resource management differ in terms of expectations for the workforce (work/life balance, flexibility)? Questions were asked about how important a work-life balance was, and expectations of work-life balance in terms of their careers.

### **Work-Life Balance**

All the students discussed work-life balance while answering the interview questions. Most of the students cited work-life balance as very important. With some students stressing the importance of not ‘burning out’ due to an overload of work, without an adequate work life balance.

*“Yes, I definitely think a work-life balance is important, I don’t want a job that’s going to burn me out completely that I can’t do anything outside of work” (Participant 1, Male).*

Others discussed the need for employers to be understanding regarding the out of work responsibilities that employees have. Examples of various responsibilities that the participants cited include family, childcare, leisure etc.

*“I hope that any employer I have in the future will understand there is more to life than just work and we all have responsibilities outside of work like childcare and family responsibilities” (Participant 2, Female).*

Many of the participants discussed their opinions on the importance of having opportunities for flexibility in their careers to allow for a healthy work-life balance.

*“Well one day in the future I hope to have a family so I think it would be important to be able to balance both work and family responsibilities and to have an employer that understands the need to give flexible working if I needed it in the future” (Participant 3).*

Many participants discuss flexible working opportunities such as working from home and again the need for employers to be understanding of their desire for flexibility. Many participants feel it is normal to ask for flexible working.

*“I hope that if I’m dedicated to an employer and have been working there a long time in the future that they’d give me flexibility like working from home or a shorter working week if I ask them for it. It is more common now.” (Participant 4, Male).*

Flexibility and work life balance were often cited together by the participants and were important aspects of their career expectations.

*“I think flexibility is important for me so that I’d be able to have a good work-life balance which I feel would motivate me and help me to appreciate my career and work hard” (Participant 5, Female).*

The participants both male and female shared a common discussion around the need for an adequate work-life balance and opportunities for flexible working.

### **Third Theme: Pay**

To analyse if career expectations such as work/life balance and career focus vary among the millennial cohort due to gender (male and female postgraduate human resource management students). Questions were asked about what the most important aspect of your career is and what would inhibit/support a good balance between work and home and about career orientation. The interview questions led many participants to discuss their need for benefits and rewards in their careers.

#### **Pay & Benefits**

Some students placed importance on individualistic aspects of a job/career. All participants discussed their financial needs for their career development. Both male and female participants discussed work and family and career orientation remained a high priority for both genders.

*“I think a work-life balance is important but I think it’s important when you’re at work that you put your all into it and focus on doing your job and getting rewarded for it. So, I’d probably choose a high salary over a work life balance if it meant I was getting a really good salary” (Participant 5, Female).*

Financial security remained a priority for some participants.

*“Pay is probably a main concern for me with making career decisions. I want to be able to live comfortably and have enough pay so that I can do that. Any job I take would have to have a good starting figure to appeal to me” (Participant 7, Male).*

Many of the students discussed their expectations on pay in their careers. Many of the students expect reasonable pay and financial security.

*“I don’t have any HR experience so I don’t expect my first HR job to pay very well, but as long as I get experience after a few years I should be able to work my way up to get decent pay” (Participant 6, Female).*

*“ I’d expect any job I go for to at least pay the average salary, I wouldn’t take a pay cut unless I knew the company had really good benefits in the future” (Participant 4, Male).*

Others seek rapid advancement and increase of payment.

*“I’ve three years’ experience working in HR, so now that I have the masters too I want to be able to get a good role that will allow me to get into a senior position with really good pay so that I’d be financially secure and also building on my experience so that I’d be able to make my way up and have a senior role. So, I do expect to make my way up quickly enough to a senior role and get my pay increased” (Participant 10, Female).*

Some students wanted incentives in their career. Benefits and rewards are common themes which appeared due to the participants views on pay, salaries, and incentives.

*“I’m actually more interested in getting a recruitment role which is of course still related to HR. I could end up working in HR in general in the future, but now I’d like to get a graduate recruitment role as I think it’d be something, I’m good at. It has benefits and incentives the more rewards then just working in HR itself unless you can get a good senior position.” (Participant 2, Female).*

Financial security for the participants appeared to be important, which is why adequate pay regarding salaries appeared to be a very common expectation amongst the participants.

#### **Fourth Theme: Success and Family**

Questions asked to the participants around seeing themselves in a management position, managing work-life balance and career and if they see gender as influencing their careers found themes emerging on success and family. When asked about reaching the top of an organisation in the future the participants had similar answers, while the male participants tended to have stronger focus on career progress and reaching the top. Although similar opinions were held amongst the participants.

*“At the moment I don’t think I see myself reaching the top of an organisation. Just because I don’t have much experience, but if you asked me that in five years’ time I could have a different answer, I’m just not sure about it at the moment...” (Participant 5, Female).*

Participants regard advancement in relation to the need to have experience to advance their position in an organisation.

*“I don’t know about the top of an organisation, but I could see myself eventually in a senior position once I make the right career decisions and put in the work. I would like to think so anyway” Participant 9, Female).*

Some participants do not see their gender as a significant influence in their career advancement and development.

*“I suppose gender can influence career decisions to an extent. But I do not think it should really affect my opportunities in the future. There are loads of females in HR management positions, so I do not see why I cannot do the same” (Participant 3, Female).*



Advancement is discussed in relation to education levels and career choices.

*“Now that I have the masters done, I should be able to make good career choices so that I end up in a good position in say 10 years’ time. Ideally, I’d like to make it to the top, but I know that’s not easy, but I want to” (Participant 4, Male).*

The students had similar opinions on family and their careers. Some students appeared to be more family orientated than others. With gender not being a significant impact on opinions.

*“I’m not sure if I want kids to be honest but that could change in the future. For now, I’m more focused on working on myself and my career” (Participant 1, Male)*

Some participants cite their focus on having both a career and family.

*“In the future I do see myself having kids, but I’d expect my partner to have an equal share of the childcare work so that I wouldn’t have to sacrifice my career” (Participant 2, Female).*

While other participants appear to be more solely focused on availing of career opportunities, rather than family life.

*“At the moment I’m not really thinking about having a family. I’m just living for now and trying to make the most of my opportunities and educating myself so that I can have a worthwhile career in HR” (Participant 5, Female).*

Lower pay is something that was more commonly discussed amongst the female students. This suggests there may be a perception of a gender pay gap amongst some female participants.

*“If I decide to have children one day it would probably mean I’d want to work part-time instead of full-time, so I could see that having a negative impact on my career seeing as a lot of manager roles want people to be full time” (Participant 10, Female).*

Although both genders discussed their financial needs for their career development. Both male and female participants discussed work and family, with career orientation remaining a high priority overall for both genders.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the interviews found a range of common themes which were emerged based on the interview transcripts and data analysis. The objectives explained briefly were to provide an insight and deeper understanding of the career expectations of the students and to analyse if their expectations were different than each other, and if their gender influences their expectations. The themes that emerged included

### ***1. Career Progression and Development,***

There was a focus on having a meaningful career that allows for development and progression with majority of the participants focusing on short term career goals, rather than short term.

### ***2. Work-Life Balance***

All the participants discussed their need for an adequate work-life balance. Flexibility and work-life balance were cited as being important to allow for career satisfaction. Employer understanding regarding the need for a work-life balance and flexible working were discussed too.

### ***3. Pay***

Many participants discussed their need for reasonable pay and financial security and others cited their need for good pay, benefits, and monetary rewards.

### ***4. Career Focus and Family***

Career orientation appeared to be a high priority for the participants, regardless of gender, with both male and female participants having different views of family and the impact of family on their careers.

The next chapter will discuss the findings from the analysis and relate the findings to literature.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the findings in detail which are described previously. This chapter will link to the literature which was discussed in the literature review chapter. The main objective and purpose of this research study was to explore the career expectations of male and female millennial human resource management students. The results of the analysis from the interviews found many categories emerging themes.

### **Overview of Research Findings**

Recognising and appreciating millennial students' opinions on their employment expectations allows for employers to recognise their needs and to allow for their expectations to be met. The research has identified that the findings suggest that millennial expectations and values are shared amongst both male and female students as they have expectations around their career development and progression as well as a healthy work-life balance.

### **Research Objective 1**

The first research objective was to develop an in-dept understanding of career expectations of millennial students undertaking the master's in human resource management.

### ***Main Findings***

The students interviewed were found to mainly have expectations related to opportunity and progression and a positive work ethic. The students overall appear to be enthusiastic and optimistic with a healthy mindset. From the interviews there appears to be a sense of 'entitlement' which is often related to millennial characteristics. All the students expressed their opinions and wants to be appreciated by their employers. The students had expectations of their careers after their master's degrees in human resource management and seek advancement and to develop new skills in their careers.

Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt (1968) developed the term work orientation. From the interviews analysis it appears that there is a bureaucratic orientation amongst the students as this orientation values career development which is discussed amongst all participants (Pyöriä1 et al., 2017). Some wanted structured development, while others wanted more career flexibility to be able to take their skills and experience elsewhere. According to McCrindle (2007) millennials tend to be less dedicated when compared to the previous generations. McCrindle (2007) believes millennials seek income to live their lives. This refers to idea that “do not live to work, but they rather work to live” (McCrindle, 2007:4). Some participants wanted structured development and loyalty in their careers, while others seek to develop themselves so that they would have flexibility in choosing their employers and making career decisions.

Protean careers according to Hall (1996) focus on individuals mapping their careers and encourages certain values. The values that influence these careers include continuous learning and opportunities for self-development (Korsakiene and Smaliukiene, 2014). There was a tendency for the participants to focus on short term career goals, with many of them unsure of where they will be in five years’ time. While others have career goals in mind for five years’ time such as being in a senior HR position. The students overall are optimistic about their career opportunities for the future and discussed their needs for learning and self-development. For millennials there is a tendency for their careers to be very individualistic according to Van Der Sluis and Poell (2003). The participants seek opportunities for development and learning to advance themselves and their careers which was evident from the interview findings.

## **Research Objective 2**

The second research objective was to analyse if postgraduate students in human resource management differ in terms of expectations for the workforce (work/life balance, flexibility)?

### ***Main Findings***

According to Twenge and Campbell (2012) millennials are said to place more value towards family and leisure rather than wage employment. The postgraduate students indicated that they want it all. This refers to their general desire for both a rewarding career and a full personal life. They want a meaningful and satisfying life outside of work. According to Saucer and Sims (2012) what is notable for millennials is their demand from organizations to provide opportunities for flexibility for a satisfactory work life balance. Their expectations around work-life balance and flexibility showed that many of the participants expect their employers to understand their need for both to ensure satisfaction in the workplace. Having a healthy work-life balance was important to many of the participants. The interviews revealed that the students had a strong focus on their careers and leisure. With many students emphasizing the importance of leisure along with focusing on their careers. Also there appears to be a shared expectation amongst the participants for employers to understand their need for an adequate work-life balance and provide flexibility to the employees to allow for a healthy work-life balance and satisfaction in the workplace.

Overall, it appears that flexibility and a work-life balance are very important for most of the participants. The participants may have out of work responsibilities which is why they hold expectations around having a healthy work life balance which provides satisfaction in both work and home life. In this sense the participants share similar work-life balance expectations.

### **Research Objective 3**

The third research objective was to analyse if career expectations such as work/life balance and career focus vary among the millennial cohort due to gender (male and female postgraduate human resource management students).

#### ***Main findings***

The study found that both male and female students had similar expectations. ‘Alpha’ career priorities include building a solid financial base and seeking high wages (Sullivan and Mainero, 2007). Many of the female and male students emphasised their desire for ‘alpha’ career priorities. While many of the female students are seeking financial gains in their careers, it signals that the female students are just as inclined to seek ‘alpha’ career priorities as males. Many of them believed that they could seek these financial gains due to their level of education.

Both male and female students had similar views on family. ‘Beta’ career priorities refer to a balance between work and family. For Gen Y there is said to be a lack of focus on traditional values in their lives unlike previous generations, such as family according to Bencsik et al (2016). Family as a theme is discussed amongst all participants so showing it as an important value for some millennials, while others discuss it as possibly being influential in their lives in the future.

Some female students see their gender as a possible barrier to management positions as they may need to work part-time to balance responsibilities, while others do not see it as a significant influence on their career. According to Kebede (2017) women experience issues when aiming for leadership positions, one of these issues may be the ‘‘double burden’’ which refers to the fact that women still are responsible for doing more household and family/ caring tasks when compared to men. Some participants referred to these issues as possibly influencing their career expectations, although according to Curtis et al., (2012) women are improving their

professional opportunities, and this is also the case as many of the participants do not see their gender as being a significant influence in their career development and have a healthy career orientated mindset. Overall, the participants shared a desire in their career expectations for career development and a healthy work life balance. Both male and females' students discussed their need for both.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Due to the interview methods used the information gathered is from a small number of participants. This allowed for thematic analysis to be used to analyse the data. The themes that emerged were common themes that were shared amongst the human resources students. Different students may have different expectations if they were from different cultures, levels of education and different college in Ireland. A larger number of participants would indicate more information on the subject matter. The students had various levels of human resources work experience. Some had no experience while others had years of experience. Future research with a larger sample of students with experience and no experience would be useful to gather more detailed information and analysis.



## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

The researcher explored literature to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. The literature allowed for a clearer understanding of the importance of understanding millennial career expectations. The objectives were used to explore the career expectations of male and female millennial students to gain a better understanding of millennial differences and if gender is influential in career expectations.

### **Summary of Findings and Resulting Conclusions**

The researcher identified interesting subjects and themes while carrying out the study. The researcher has gained a deeper insight into the importance of understanding the career expectations of educated millennial students. The interviews allowed for the researcher to gain insight into the student's thoughts and feeling in relation to their career expectations. Although the researcher interviewed a small number of students, it is clear that from the findings of the interviews that the students had similar thoughts and expectations.

The results of the study found that the student's interview, and personal responses were very informative. The students felt that flexibility is important to have in their careers and that having options for flexibility in their careers would lead to a better work life balance. The results indicated the importance both a work – life balance and career focus in the career expectations of the millennials overall, while there was slightly more of a tendency for the males students to emphasise their career focus over work – life balance, and females to focus on work – life balance over career focus. But overall very similar expectations were held amongst the participants. This is insightful for future research and for employers.

## **Recommendations**

The findings from the study are useful as they provide information about the career expectations of male and female millennial masters students in human resource management. Their career expectations provide insight into what they expect from future employers in terms of career focus and work-life balance expectations. The findings are useful for organisations to understand the needs and expectations of future HR professionals. The findings may be helpful to allow for an easy transition into the workforce as potential employers will be able to understand the needs of the millennial students.

Development and progression were important for the students. Employers should make employees aware of what the job involves and what the company can offer millennials in terms of career development at an early stage. This means they would know if the organisation is right for them and will allow them to reach their career goals. The students are ambitious, and career focused. Organisations would benefit from providing a structured career path to graduates. This would help the students map out their career journeys and focus on both their short- and long-term career goals. Provision of this would allow the students' needs for structure and their short-term career goals. This could help avoid job hopping and help to retain talented HR employees.

Another recommendation would be to send managers on training courses that would update the managers on the needs of millennials in the workplace. This would enhance their skills and knowledge to manage millennials more effectively. They would then be able to change any practices that were outdated which would help the organisation. Organisations should provide work-life balance and flexibility regulations as this is in line with the expectations of both male and female students. This would allow for greater productivity amongst employees and help

retainment of talent which means the cost implication is saved as the employees will stay rather than leave.

Pay appeared as an important expectation for the students which may mean that organisations should provide job descriptions that outline the salary and incentives that accompany the role. The master's students are more educated than undergraduate students which means that companies should acknowledge their worth and understand their expectations around pay. But for companies this pay be costly as having highly educated employees their pay and incentives may be higher than other graduate employees.

Career development and progression appear to be important for the students. Organisations should recognise that employees with master's degrees in HR expect better pay and opportunities to develop themselves. From the findings of the study it's evident that the participants want career development opportunities. Organisations should invest the time and cost into postgraduate HR students career development expectations as it would be an investment into the quality of the students and would allow for career progression within an organisation which would improve the commitment of the employees and add to the growth of organisations.

## **Implication of Findings**

The financial impact of the recommendations and timescale are discussed in this section. Understanding the career expectations of postgraduate millennial male and female students is useful for employers to allow for a workplace that has a positive impact on the employer and employee. Organisations need to focus on career development opportunities through investing in training and development opportunities as well as learning and development opportunities for students. Organisations should invest into these areas as there are many benefits. Allowing for a healthy work-life balance which includes allowing for flexibility in the workplace would increase productivity and lower turnover rates in organisations once employees are satisfied.

From a timescale perspective it is important these recommendations would be introduced and managed within the everyday workings of organisations in order to provide opportunities for employees to remain satisfied in their career development. If possible, organisations should aim to make learning and development to be a part of their values which would appeal to the millennial generation. Both male and female students seek a balance between their career and lifestyle. Organisations that understand this and take measures to allow for these expectations to be met will benefit.

The research has indicated that the students have various career expectations. Future research would be beneficial with a larger sample of students to gain more of an understanding from a bigger sample. The recommendations made were based on the results of the interviews. Overall, the financial impact and timescale for these recommendations are quite manageable for organisations to provide for their employees as the benefits are quite important and would provide a workplace that will satisfy employees which would increase productivity. The recommendations would provide rewards for both employees and organisations.

## **Personal Learning Statement**

Carrying out this thesis has been a positive learning experience and has given me new skills which will benefit me in my future career. I focused on a topic I find very interesting and relevant to the current workplace as the millennial generation is growing. It is my biggest academic accomplishment to date.

While completing the stages of the thesis, there were issues that related to various aspects of the project. One of the main issues I had was due to the impact of the outbreak of COVID 19 which had an impact on the completion of this project. As I was doing interviews, I was unable to carry out face to face interviews due to health and safety guidelines. Instead I carried out interviews online. This came with a level of difficulty due to poor Wi-Fi connections with some of the interviewees. However, I managed this by speaking clearly and slowly and by asking the interviewees to do the same to make sure the information was clear and audible.

There was also a sudden change in my learning environment and my planning of the completion of this thesis and my studies in Human Resource Management were finished online and with further assessments instead of exams. This impacted on the completion of this thesis also and I had to motivate myself to complete the thesis in my home and without visits to the library for books or study space. But the hardships along the way allowed me to learn that it is important to have patience and to continue with it and to manage my time and to self-motivate.

As I was only able to interview 10 students, perhaps using a focus group or larger sample would be beneficial in the future as it would help to gain a deeper understanding of millennial expectations from a larger group if there was more time to complete the project this would be suitable.

I also gained valuable skills through the completion of the project. I believe the skills I have enhanced from the project will help me in my future career. The project allowed me to develop my research, academic writing skills and time management skills. The project allowed me to increase my knowledge on an important and relevant topic which will benefit me in the future in HR.

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## APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

I Savannah McGuire am undergoing my master's in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland. I would like to thank you for considering participating in the study carried out by me and supervised by Doctor Corina Sheerin.

**Purpose** The purpose of this study is to explore the career expectations of millennial human resource management students.

**What will the study involve?** The study will involve online semi-structured interviews. The interviews will allow for the students to discuss their career expectations. They should take approximately forty to sixty minutes. They will be recorded and later transcribed. The information gained from the interviews will be organized through thematic analysis and discussed in the study. The data will be anonymous.

**Why have you been asked to take part?** The study requires male and female millennial human resource management students. This means that all of the participants will have similar characteristics, this includes their education and age group.

**Do you have to take part?** Participation in this study is voluntary, and a consent form (appendix B) will be signed by you. If at any point during the interviews you wish to withdraw, you may do so.

**Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?** Yes, all information will be kept confidential. Any identifiable information will be removed to protect your identity. The interview data will be stored on my computer and kept protected from others and deleted after the thesis results are out.

**What will happen to the result?** The information will be transcribed. The dissertation will be available online through NCI'S TRAP archive where it will be accessible to you and the public.

**Is there possible disadvantages of taking part in this interview?** There aren't any possible disadvantages of taking part in this study for me to foresee.

Please contact me if you have any concerns:

Email: [x19127251@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x19127251@student.ncirl.ie) Thank you for your consideration. Please sign the consent form if you agree to participate.

# APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

## CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

- 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 consequence 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 signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained by the researcher until the researcher receives the results of their dissertation. After that time, it will be deleted.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview which may contain any identifying material about me will be removed.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

***SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT***

***DATE***

***SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER***

***DATE***



## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Tell me a about your career and what your job means to you?
2. What are your career aspirations? Do you have a particular career path in mind in Human Resource Management?
3. Where do you see yourself in the next two years?
4. Where do you see yourself in the next five years?
5. Where do you see yourself in the next ten years?
6. Work Life Balance- how important is it to you? Explain. Tell me about your work/life balance expectations in terms of your career?
7. What individual expectations do you have for your career? What's really important to you.
8. In terms of career development, what would success look like there? What is important to you- how do you seek out that development?
9. Do you feel there is a tension between work life balance and career? Why/Why not. In your own experience or based on your expectations what would success in career and good work life balance look like? What are the factors you feel will inhibit/support a good balance between work and home?
10. What is the most important aspect of your career?
11. Do you consider yourself being career orientated? Explain
12. Do you see yourself in a management position? Why/Why not?
13. Do you see yourself reaching the top of an organisation in the future?
14. Do you think gender influences career? Why/Why not?