Exploring the barriers and inequalities faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace

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Abstract

Title of thesis: Exploring the barriers and inequalities faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace.

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Although gender discrimination has been decreasing over time, the barriers and enablers influencing career advancement of women in the workplace are still present. The millennial generation has been more aware of gender inequalities and has different perceptions of discrimination compared to other generations, therefore understanding challenges and existing barriers for millennial women are key factors for organizations to decrease gender barriers.

This study explored the barriers influencing the career advancement of millennial women in the administrative sector in Ireland. To complete this project, the author conducted qualitative research by opting for a structured interview to gather data from five respondents, that was required to answer nineteen open-ended questions, including previous experiences they had related to gender discrimination. The results indicate that gender stereotypes and motherhood myths are still barriers present for women when it comes to career progression. The broader implications of this research highlight the fact that millennial women believe that gender barriers are still perceived in the workplace through discriminatory attitudes that may be normalised and difficult to be recognized as discriminatory.

Declaration

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1. Introduction

Gender differences between women and men can result in different experiences in the workplace (Padavic and Reskin, 2002). According to Rawat and Mathew (2021), gender discrimination is described as a distinct treatment a person could have in the workplace that could result in injustice and would not have happened if the person was from the opposite gender. The origin of discrimination can be associated with a cultural factor that is based on the women stereotype and in the organizational policies, increasing gender discrimination in areas such as promotion, wage and hiring and impeding gender equality (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

Millennials have been entering the workforce in large numbers and currently at 2020 millennials constitute 50% of the workforce, being the largest generation in the labour market (PwC, 2011). Despite being recognized as a generation more adaptable to change, organizations are still stuck backwards in terms of cultural beliefs (Barrington, 2019). Therefore, millennial women still face similar barriers to previous generations which are reflected in career development, considering that is harder for women than for men to achieve leadership positions in companies (Ely, Stone and Ammerman, 2014).

In summary, the low number of women in leadership positions has promoted studies recognizing different conscious and unconscious barriers and mechanisms for women in career advancement (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Research has indicated that some stereotypes around the female gender still exist, therefore women are strongly associated as the main caretaker of the family, prioritizing and supporting family first instead of work (Ellemers, 2018). Over the decades, this female stereotype that leads to "motherhood myths" has been studied aiming to explain the relation between existent barriers for women in different areas such as recruitment, promotion and salary, versus discriminatory gender practices due to motherhood (Verniers and Vala, 2018).

Although the implementation of legislation and support programs aim to reduce direct discriminatory practices and inequalities in the workplace (Kartolo and Kwantes, 2019), women still face challenges to progress in their careers, therefore a considerable gender discrimination gap can be related to these barriers. Research has indicated that women need to prove themselves and work harder than a man to be promoted in their careers (Insch, McIntyre and Napier, 2008).

Besides that, the lack of female role models in leadership positions is still a barrier to career advancement (Barrington, 2019).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the barriers and inequalities faced by millennial women in the workplace in Ireland. To comply with this objective, three initial questions arise: What type of discrimination do women face in the workplace?, what are the barriers faced by women in the administrative sector for career advancement? and what are the challenges faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace?. To respond to these questions, millennial women working in the administrative sector in Ireland was chosen as a study as it's the largest generation in the labour market now (PwC, 2011). Due to this fact, it's important to investigate further the barriers millennial women are facing to progress in their careers because of their significant effect on organizations. Furthermore, very little is known in previous literature that attempt to study whether these barriers are the same for the millennial generation.

Although millennial women are more conscious of gender inequalities in the workplace (PwC,2011), there is still an inconsistent relationship between cultural beliefs and the barriers to career advancement. Therefore, this paper aims to help millennial women and organizations to identify and understand whether the challenges faced by them in the workplace, such as gender discrimination and inequalities, are still factors that can influence career advancement reflecting the Irish context.

2. Literature Review

This review of literature is an abstract of the most significant theories for this paper that have been previously discussed by other researchers, aims to identify the main barriers women needs to face in the workplace that influence career progression, focusing on the administrative sector. To have a better understanding of the subject, the literature review is structured and analysed as follow:

- Discrimination experienced by women in hiring
- Discrimination experienced by women in salary
- Women and career progression
- Gender Stereotype
- Mechanisms that lead to lower wages in women career's
- Work-life balance

-   Role of organizational culture in gender discrimination
-   Challenges of millennial women in the workplace

2.1 Gender Discrimination

2.1.1 Discrimination experienced by women in hiring

Gender discrimination is still experienced by women in areas such as hiring, promotion and career opportunities (Eagly and Carli, 2007). One of the reasons why women may be discriminated in the workplace is related to the "motherhood myths", where women are expected to be a mother at some point in her life, impacting career opportunities (Verniers and Vala, 2018). In this view, a "motherhood penalty" may exist in the meaning that mothers with the same qualifications and skills that men and non-mothers are less likely to be considered for a job interview (Correll, Benard and Paik, 2007). In consequence, based on motherhood myths, organizations may discriminate women considering recruitment, rewards and performance evaluation, defending that at some point in their lives, women are less likely to be involved in work due to family roles (Verniers and Vala, 2018). These findings further support Nielsen, Simonsen and Verner's (2004) claim that due to family needs, women are more likely to take more days off. Thus, women are penalized since employers' unwilling to hire women and promote them to higher positions (Tomaskovic-Devey and Skaggs, 1999).

2.1.2 Discrimination experienced by women in salary

Gender discrimination is also related to salary, regarding the wage pay gap role (Verniers and Vala, 2018). According to data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), women earn about 14,4% less than men employees on average in Ireland in 2017, highlighting the increase in the gender wage gap compared to 12.9% in 2012 (Central Statistics Office, 2019b). This can be explained by the difference between 1,242,000 men employed in Ireland in 2019 compared to only 1,058,100 women, showing that only 46% of those employed were female in 2019 (Central Statistics Office, 2019b). Additionally, most female workers (79.3%) is seen in positions such as taking on caring responsibilities and leisure, while most men are in skilled trades positions (90.9%), showing that

higher-paid sectors tend to be male-dominated while the lower-paid sector is more likely to be dominated by female, such as childcare (Central Statistics Office, 2019b). However, in the EU, the gender wage pay gap doesn't take into consideration differences in education, professional experience and type of job, which are the factors that may contribute to the gap (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021).

It's necessary to highlight that the gender wage gap has been well documented in the literature and is still persistent through the decades (Duraisamy and Duraisamy, 2016). According to Blau and Kahn (2017), even though women have a higher education than men, it doesn't necessarily mean that they will get higher-paying positions. This assumption is also associated with the hiring discrimination experienced by women that was previous discussed in this study. The gender wage gap can be explained by the option of women in choosing family friend jobs that limit their skills, requesting less effort and training in their jobs aim to focus on child care (Becker, 1985). Blau and Kahn (2017) suggest that women tend to choose easier job positions that can be reconciled to the family responsibilities, but in consequence, are less rewarding to them. This view is supported by Auspurg, Hinz and Sauer (2017), who explain the lower remuneration of women can be in consequence of lower performance and productivity due to family responsibilities. These findings suggest that women that became mothers tend to stay more time out of the labour market and get less work experience, in consequence, have less chances to be promoted and experience slower growth in earnings over time (Gangl and Ziefle, 2009).

2.2   Women and career progression

Despite a small minority that breakthrough invisible barriers and penetrate the management level, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions (Wynn and Correll, 2018). In Ireland, only 26% of women hold senior roles in 2019, 11,5% Chief Executive Officer (CEO), 19,6% of Board of Directors and 28,3% of Senior Executive roles (Central Statistics Office, 2019a). The statistic confirms the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and the invisible barriers faced by them such as the gender stereotypes and interpersonal factors, that contribute to the creation of a glass ceiling in the workplace, making it difficult to minimize the gender inequality and gender pay gap in the workplace (Heilman and Caleo, 2018).

The glass ceiling term was first used as a metaphor in a Wall Street Journal article about Business Women in 1986 by Hymowitz and Shellhardt. These invisible barriers can be explained by institutional practices, such as recruitment and promotion (Oakley, 2000). For example, Catalyst (cited in Oakley, 2000) stresses that the problems related to the promotion of women are due to companies don't have any effective policies or programs that take them to senior positions. These invisible barriers can also be related to behavioural and cultural explanations, such as stereotyping, that will be explored in the next section of this study, and leadership styles (Oakley, 2000). In leadership styles, men are more likely to be associated with those in power, while women can be less recognized because of their lack of self-confidence or lack of authority (Oakley, 2000). Additionally, women can be perceived as less efficient due to intermittent careers resulted from the combination of work and family duties, without prioritizing any of them, these choices made by women can increase the invisible barriers for the glass ceiling and career development (Uysal and Ak 2020). Nevertheless, these invisible barriers can also be related to always be conscious of being women in a male-dominated world and constantly prove themselves and work harder than men (Insch, McIntyre and Napier, 2008). In this view, women face more inequalities in the workplace and don't have the same opportunities as men in recruitment and promotion, even if they are considered to have the same aspirations as them (Kim and Brunner, 2009).

Moving beyond, formal mentoring programmes can drive to informal networks and might increase women's under-representation in managerial positions, influencing career advancement (Ehrich, 2008). Mentors give more support and opportunities to individuals to achieve a promotion (Allen *et al*., 2004) and besides that, mentoring can make the employees perceive less differential treatment in the organization (Raabe and Beehr, 2003). Women in leadership positions as mentors can reinforce women visibility in the workplace, serving as role models and supporting professional networks for career advancement (Cook and Glass, 2014).

The informal network is another interpersonal factor that can influence women career advancement (Elacqua *et al*., 2009). The network can be described as the use of relevant contacts that are important to the career aim to share recommendations and information that can contribute to career advancement (Burke, 1984). Informal networks existent to senior men in the organization can result in a lack of visibility to women that might not be treated in the same way as men in the organization (Elacqua *et al.,* 2009). Babic and Hansez (2021) highlight that women that grow in their professional career and get to the management level have to work harder than men to achieve

this position. Additionally, the lack of access to the network can minimize the chances of promotion in the women career, conducting in a perceived glass ceiling effect (Brass, 1985).

To summarise, it can be noticed that the understanding of the points previously described is fundamental to understand the invisible barriers faced by women to develop their careers and achieve leadership positions in the workplace. Women in leadership positions are perceived as less effective than the male gender (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2002), therefore the glass ceiling may be considered the root of gender discrimination (Uysal and Ak, 2020).

2.3 Gender Stereotype

Gender stereotype is described as generalizing characteristics of men and women and are differentiated as descriptive and prescriptive by psychologists (Heilman, 2012). Descriptive stereotypes are described as how women and men are like and prescriptive stereotypes is described as how women and men should be like (Burgess and Borgida, 1999).

Examples of descriptive gender stereotypes are often linked to how both genders differ, including communal that is cited for defined women characteristics and agency that is always cited to defined men characteristics (Eagly and Steffen, 1984). Communal characteristics can be described as women considered to be nice and warmth but less competent in the workplace (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick, 2008). Nonetheless, women are described as sensitive, gentle and kind (Eagly and Karau, 2002). This view of communal characteristics that are strongly related to women, can be defined as women prioritizing and supporting the family and the care for others first, forgetting the requirements for professional achievement (Ellemers, 2018). Additionally, the female gender can be related to being more emotionally sensitive, describing women as more intuitive, perceptive and even obedient (Heilman, 2012). Thus, recent research reveals that women stereotypes include findings that women are still seen as overly emotional and not tough enough in the workplace (Ramaci *et al*., 2017), leading to the conclusion that women are still seen as homemakers and, because of this, women tend to give preference to the household responsibilities before their careers (Ruzungunde, Zhou and Shingiriya, F., 2020).

Expectations created by the gender stereotype can interfere with a woman's career, therefore prescriptive stereotypes aim to impose the attributes and behaviours that women should have, that are more appropriate or inappropriate for the female gender (Heilman, 2012). In prescriptive

stereotypes, women should be communal, always demonstrating concern for others and showing nurturing attributes (Heilman, 2002). Also, prescriptive gender stereotype indicates the "should nots" attributes related to women that include agency characteristics and behaviours that are associated to men (Heilman, 2012). Furthermore, gender stereotypes can direct affect career advancement, since women are considered to not have the attributes that are believed to be needed to succeed in a position that is considered only to the male gender, generating a perceived lack of fit (Heilman, 1983). According to Heilman (2012), the lack of fit is the requirements such as leadership and toughness, which are skills necessary to obtain success in these considered male positions, however, these requirements are considered to be characteristics only of the male gender stereotype. Therefore, these negative expectations related to the lack of fit conduct to the presumption that women are unlikely to achieve success in male positions (Heilman and Caleo, 2018).

Women that don't follow gender prescriptions can be affected with penalties in their career (Heilman, 2012). Gender stereotype generates cultural beliefs that the male gender is more competent in the workplace, qualifying them to higher rewards (Ridgeway, 2001). Females are also expected to behave as being nice and can be penalized if doesn't meets these expectations (Rudman and Glick, 2001) besides that, due to these gender expectations, women can be recompensated differently in terms of wages, with lower pay (Collischon, 2021) and lower chance to be hired and promote (Heilman, 2012).

To summarise, gender stereotypes are still a challenge for women nowadays and continue to bring disadvantages and consequences for them in the workplace, interfering in the woman's career advancement and impacting in different areas such as promotion, hiring and evaluation (Wynn and Correll, 2018). Thus, when considering all the stereotype context, is proved that the gender stereotype between men and women beliefs is persistent to change through the decades (Haines, Deaux and Lofaro, 2016), contributing to the women underrepresentation in a leadership position and increasing the gender inequality in the workplace nowadays (Heilman and Caleo, 2018).

2.4 Mechanisms that lead to lower wages in women career's

Gender inequality and the perception of lower wages as fair is due to women comparing themselves to other women in considered female occupations that have low average wages

(Festinger, 1954). This can be explained due to a person prefer to relate to another individual with similar characteristics such as gender and occupation (Festinger, 1954), since these characteristics are associated with performance and give information to the individual of what can be expected (Gibson and Lawrence, 2010). However, since women usually work in professions and sectors distinguished by lower wages levels, they are more likely to expect lower pay than men, increasing the pay gap (Auspurg *et al.*, 2017).

Moving beyond, women may perceive lower wages as being fair to a certain point (Auspurg *et al.*, 2017), since the low expectations in their careers involve the references that women have in their career accomplishments (Gibson and Lawrence 2010). As result, women might be partially unconscious of the pay gap between female and their male colleagues Major (cited in Auspurg *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, the lower wages can be justified by different opportunities that women have compared to men since women can be perceived with less merit in the labour market (Auspurg *et al.*, 2017). From this perspective, gender inequalities might only be minimized if women could compare themselves to female occupations earning high pay (Ridgeway, 2011).

This assumption is also associated with other theories. For instance, there are theoretical arguments that highlight that women are more likely to choose undergraduate programs that lead to job positions with lower wages (Carmichael, 2017). Carmichael (2017) points out that women tend to choose undergraduate programs such as education, nursing and hairdressing which is considered a job category with lower wages (Bass,1990), while men are more likely to choose undergraduate programs that lead to job positions in higher wages categories, such as engineering, mathematics and technology (Foong *et al.*, 2018; Barone, 2011). Despite women being more highly educated now compared to men (Blau, Ferber and Winkler, 2014), education is still more relevant for women in the workplace since the labour force are still more selective on education for the female gender than for the male gender (Blau and Kahn, 2017). Nonetheless, the increase of women in college can be related to the increase of women in the workforce, resulting in women being more qualified to high-level positions (Blau and Kahn, 2017), but due to horizontal occupational segregation, women are more likely to stay in functional areas of the business where leadership positions are not likely to be chosen (Kossek, Su and Wu, 2016).

Additionally, aside from the differences in the undergraduate program selection that leads to the job position category, women are also less likely to negotiate (Bruns, 2019), because they believe this can be negatively perceived in the workplace evaluation (Foong *et al.*, 2018). As a

consequence, women demand lower remuneration to the workforce achievements (Auspurg *et al.*, 2017).

2.5 Work-life balance

While there is not a single clear definition of the work-life balance concept in the literature Drobnič (2011) and Hobson (2018) describe work-life balance as the balance between employment and parenting. It's suggested that work-life balance can also influence the person well-being such as health and family satisfaction (Keyes, 2002). Nonetheless, researches have focused on women work-life balance due to the impact on career advancement and satisfaction in work (Durbin, Page and Walby, 2017).

According to Liswandi (2020), economic pressures conducted women to enter the workforce aim to support their families, increasing the number of working women in the market. Despite women have entered into the labour market, their domestic role responsibilities remain the same resulting in a struggle to balance work and family (Favero and Heath, 2012), having a negative influence on the women work-life balance such as work overload (Virick, Lilly and Casper, 2007) and job demands (Chiang, Birtch and Kwan, 2010).

However, women and men have different perceptions of work-life balance and prioritise work and family in different ways (Vasumathi, 2018). Women are more likely to combine work and family (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993) since child care responsibilities in the majority are still related to women assuming most of the childbearing duties (Porter and Ayman, 2010). In other words, women are inclined to sacrifice more at work for family and home duties (Jennings and McDougald, 2007) and consequently, women tend to look for more flexible work as a source since they take more domestic chores duties than men (Davis, Greenstein and Marks, 2007), however, jobs that offer a good level of flexibility tend to have a lower pay (Dilmaghani and Tabvuma 2019). On the other hand, men are more likely to separate the domain between work and family (Andrews and Bailyn, 1993), in other words, men tend to sacrifice more at home for work commitments (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). According to Doble and Supriya (2010), men demonstrate more satisfaction when they are recognized and achieve their goals at work even if the cost is to ignore their family. Nonetheless, men see the working hours flexibility as a synonym of control

(Loscocco, 1997) and tend to benefit more from the work-life balance in organizations than women (Burke, 2002).

To summarise, work-life balance is a key point for women career advancement and satisfaction, therefore work-life programs such as child care, employee assistance programs and other types of support programs (Cascio, 2000) are fundamental to keep a balance between work and life in the workplace (Wang and Verma, 2012).

2.6 Role of organizational culture in gender discrimination

The organizational culture is described in a general consensus in the literature as reflecting the values, attitudes and beliefs that are in common between the organization members (Schein, 2010). Furthermore, organizational culture is critical to the organization success (Vaara *et al*., 2010) and has a direct impact on employee performance and job satisfaction (Murphy, Cooke and Lopez, 2013).

Organizational discrimination is decreasing over time, with the inclusion of legislation changes to reduce direct discriminatory practices and inequalities in the workplace (Kartolo and Kwantes, 2019). The European Union created gender equality legislation – Article 119 EEC (now 157 TFEU), was introduced aim to prohibit direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace in fields such as pay (Burri and Prechal, 2008). In Ireland, the Department of Justice and Equality (2017) introduced a national strategy for women and girls for the period of 2017-2020 aims to present the policy framework and strategies on the government's agenda, addressing the remaining barriers to women's equality advancement in the workplace. Furthermore, legislative initiatives were introduced in the EU to incentive board diversity and gender representation (Government of Ireland, 2017). The European Union (Disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large undertakings and groups) Regulations 2017, promotes that companies should annually disclose the board of directors diversity policy aim to obligate companies to put in place policy for gender diversity (Government of Ireland, 2017). Nonetheless, the European Commission Progress programme presented a guide to organisational practices such as recruitment, performance and promotion, that helps to achieve gender equality in the workplace (Cross *et al.,* 2016).

Furthermore, Avery, McKay and Wilson (2008) stress the perception of indirect discrimination may still be perceived by employees in the workplace, and this can be related to informal networks and mentoring programmes that can influence women career advancement (Elacqua *et al*., 2009). Mentoring programmes support the employee by helping them to comprehend the organisations' rules and policies, contributing to the development of confidence and career advancement in the company (Helms, Arfken and Bellar, 2016). Thus, Jang, Chiriboga and Small (2008) and Goldman *et al* (2006) argue that these perceived discriminations can have different impacts on the employee outcomes, such as psychological well-being and job performance.

Therefore, the growth of diversity in the workplace is important for the organizations to stay careful with employee's perceptions and beliefs of what is discrimination for them (Kartolo and Kwantes, 2019). Besides that, the promotion of diversity programs in the organization has a positive perception for the employees (McKay *et al*., 2007). This view is supported by Larsen *et al.* (2013) who suggest that simple management practices such as active communication and diversity training can help to reduce perceived discrimination practises in the workplace.

On the other hand, research shows that women don't react positively to gender equality programs (Beaton and Tougas, 2001; Matheson *et al.,*1994). Truxillo and Bauer (2011) argue that women tend to have a negative perception of approaches, reflecting women as weak and in need of preferential treatment to succeed, increasing the barriers to reducing gender inequality in the workplace.

2.7 Challenges of millennial women in the workplace

According to the literature, there is no general consensus regarding the date Millennials was born, but for this study, the Millennials comprises individuals born between 1977 and 2000 (Pinzaru *et al*., 2016). Millennials or Generation Y workers have been described as very different from previous generations in the workforce (Solnet and Hood, 2008). Despite the increase of women from this generation in the workforce, women face barriers to career advancement and are still underrepresented and not making to leadership positions in organizations (Kelan, 2012). One of the challenges faced by millennial women to advance in their career is that there are very few women role models that can support them to learn new roles (Barrington, 2019). Besides that, millennial women should create visibility through networks, because is through them that they can

share their experiences, however, they are not attracted to conventional women networks (Kelan, 2012). Furthermore, mentoring is essential for millennial development, since gives developmental feedback and guidance from their leaders (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010), enabling an effective share of knowledge between generations (Martin, 2005).

Additionally, most organizational structures were designed when women were not so present in the workplace, reflecting a design that took into consideration only men's experiences (Acker, 1990). Besides that, for a generation that is recognized as "digital native" and more adaptable to changes, organizations are still stuck backwards in terms of how they do things (Barrington, 2019). Nonetheless, millennial women still need to show male stereotyped characteristics in the workplace aim to be perceived as professional workers and achieve leadership positions (Kelan, 2012). This can be related to the fact that prevailing leadership styles penalize women since they believe their styles of leadership and communication is inconsistent with the one present in their organizations, not contributing to their development to achieve leadership positions (Devillard *et al*., 2013). In this view, some millennial women may use some strategies to be taken seriously in the workplace, such as change the way they dress, too look older and less "girlie", the way they talk, their behaviour and even adapt traits of masculinity to be seen as more competent (Worth, 2016). This is complemented by Allmendinger (cited in Kelan, 2012) who argues that millennial women can be more critical regarding their performance. Moreover, millennial women may accept poor treatment in the workplace based on age and gender stereotypes and adapt to different workplace norms, because they expect the job will offer great opportunities in the future (Worth, 2016).

Furthermore, women from the millennial generation have a bigger perception of gender inequality in the workplace. (PwC,2011). According to PwC (2011), millennial women believes that men are more likely to be promoted internally due to gender inequality in the workplace. Besides that, millennials workers agree that the opportunities in the organization are not equal for all, going against the diversity culture promoted by organizations (PwC, 2011). For example, millennial women believe that international experiences are essential to a successful career and contribute to learning and development, however, according to a PwC study (Flood, 2015), only 20% of millennial women were indicated to an international position, while 80% of men were given the chance for an international assignment.

Moving beyond, millennial women value the flexibility at work, therefore work-life balance is very important for the job satisfaction of this generation (PwC, 2011). According to Broadbridge, Maxwell and Ogden (2007), millennials are less likely to sacrifice others aspects of their life in favour of work, thus millennials give more value to their family and leisure than to work (Twenge and Campbell, 2012). As a result, millennial women are less worried about career-marriage conflicts (Barnett *et al*., 2003). Besides that, millennial women are prioritizing others aspects of life and work such as being healthy and enjoying their jobs, while delaying having children and start a family (Smith, 2010). Furthermore, without an appropriate work-life balance, millennials may seek other job opportunities that can support their needs of work and non-work activities for a better work-life balance (Waikar, Sweet and Morgan, 2016).

2.8 Conclusion and Research Gaps

A review of the literature outlined that many studies have attempted to explain the causes and effects of gender discrimination in the workplace. The labour market is gendered and women still face a significant deficit in the labour market due to the sustained viewpoint of masculine organizational culture. The literature strongly suggests that gender stereotyping is a meaningful barrier faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace, that have a negative impact on women career progression as they can affect their development, expectations and professional choices.

Additionally, many studies have attempted to explain how gender discrimination is perceived by women in organizations, by taking into consideration the glass ceiling effect that can prevent women to get to leadership positions. Nonetheless, the literature review reveals that besides the barriers previously mentioned that women already face in the workplace, millennial women still face the same challenges such as the lack of role models and leadership styles that can interfere in the career advancement due to negative perception of their gender and generation.

It's crucial to take into consideration that the principal objective of this study is to understand whether gender discrimination and stereotype is an aspect that drives the underrepresentation of women of the millennial generation in the administrative sector to progress in their careers. Despite the increase of women from the millennial generation in the workforce and the progress of organizational practices such as diversity and inclusion programs, women still face the same

barriers as previous generations in the workplace. This can be due to cultural beliefs such as gender stereotypes, where women are still seen as very "girlie" to leadership positions without the right competences to develop in their careers. Nonetheless, different attitudes of this generation, such as change the way they dress and their behaviour so they can be taken seriously, may contribute to gender discrimination in the workplace.

While there has been much research on the subjects described previously, there is no much evidence of research that has considered the millennial generation when analysing the challenges faced by women in the workplace. According to the literature review, further research may be necessary to address some gaps in the literature. Discrimination may be perceived differently and have a different reaction depending on culture, also other groups on the basis should be considered in future researches such as race, age and socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, the researches in the literature review were done in different countries, stressing the importance and necessity of this research in Ireland, furthermore, the literature review has a focus in different profession but don't emphasizes the administrative sector.

3. Research question and objectives

3.1 Research aim

The overall purpose of this research is to investigate the existent barriers faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace. The research aims to establish whether these barriers that were previously finding in the literature, such as gender discrimination, inequality and stereotype are factors that still influence women millennial career advancement and if these perceived challenges may be mixed towards millennial attitude in the workplace.

3.2 Research question

To comply with the aim of this research, three initial questions arise:
1. What type of discrimination do women face in the workplace?
2. What are the barriers faced by women in the administrative sector for career advancement?
3. What are the challenges faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace?

3.3 Research objectives

To address and answer the aim of this study, the following objectives described below were set to help the researcher gather data:

- To explore the different barriers to career advancement for women in the workplace.

- To examine whether gender discrimination affects career progression.

- To explore whether gender inequality is perceived differently according to the millennial generation.

- To understand if there are any programmes or initiatives that companies are promoting gender equality and career progression of millennial women.

To the knowledge of the researcher of this dissertation, there is no other study on barriers and inequalities faced by women in the administrative sector that focus on the millennial generation in the Irish context. Nonetheless, the research objectives is what will guide the author of this dissertation to investigate the subjective of this study.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter will introduce the research question and delineate the methodology taken into consideration to collected and investigate the data collection for this research aim to achieve the purpose of this dissertation. Also, in this chapter, the author will justify and outline the chosen methodological approach that will be applied to answerer the main question of this study. In summary, this section covers:

- The methodological choice and the type of data that was gathered

- The methods of data collection, which includes the sampling technique and recruitment, and the procedures used to collect the data.

- The methods used for data analysis, which demonstrates how the data was processed and analysed.

The "Research Onion" (Figure 1) suggested by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) was used as a guide for the development of this study. This concept clarifies the stages necessary to formulate and conduct research, suggesting that the process starts from an outer layer such as defining the research philosophies, to the centre of the Research Onion that is the techniques and procedures (Saunders *et al.,* 2019).
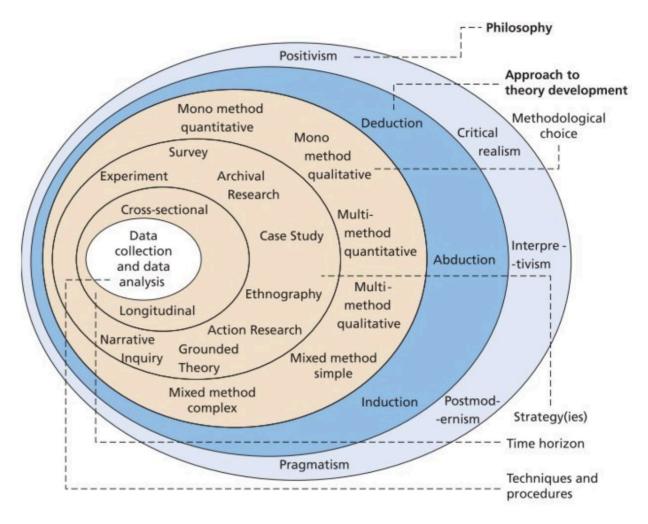

Figure 1 - Research onion (Saunders et al., 2019)

4.2 Research philosophy

The research philosophy can be referred to as the assumption and beliefs that shapes all the elements of the research aim to guide the progress and develop the knowledge (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). These beliefs and assumptions shape the researcher understanding of the research questions, which induces the choice of the methodology and the interpretation of the results (Crotty, 1998). Thus, the combination of these elements when fitted together will allow the researcher to design a consistent research project (Saunders *et al.,* 2019).

For a better study, the **interpretivism philosophy** was adopted in this research, since through this approach is possible to gain insights into the barriers that millennial women are facing in the workplace, according to the participants' background. This approach stresses that circumstances of life are subjective (Bryman and Bell, 2015) since all knowledge comes from interpretation (Quinlan *et al.,* 2015). Saunders *et al.* (2019) complement this idea suggesting that individuals have different cultural backgrounds and assumptions, therefore the world exists from different interpretations and perceptions of human beings, resulting in different understandings of social worlds and contexts. Thus, the participants' different cultural backgrounds give different perceptions and viewpoints of what is gender discrimination, bringing different insights to the researcher. This philosophy is also more focused on observing the individual behaviour instead of emphasises the causes and effects (Neuman, 2000), therefore this philosophy suggests that the researcher may collect the data in a manner of unstructured or semi-structured way, conducting a qualitative investigation (Lin, 1998).

4.3 Research Approach

Once the philosophy that will guide the research is established, the researcher also needs to define the approach to theory development. According to Awuzie and McDermott (2017), the adoption of a research approach is fundamental to determine the structure of research design, besides that the research approach method can provide efficient answers for the research questions. Saunders *et al.* (2019) propose three different types of reasoning that can be adopted by the researcher, which are briefly described below.

The **inductive approach** is chosen by the researcher because it presents the evidence of what is seen as truth (Flick *et al*., 2004). It takes into consideration the observer' values, perceptions and interpretation that leads to a conclusion (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010). This approach is more likely to have small samples to collect the data with different points of view and interpretations about what is in question, therefore are usually taken into consideration by interpretivists for qualitative data (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The inductive approach is suitable for this research because implies a gathering of raw data and analysis from the interviews aim to allow the researcher to understand the data collected and develop explanations (Saunders *et al.*, 2019) of the barriers faced by millennial women. Furthermore, in the inductive approach, through observation, it's possible to identify patterns and regularities that guide and allow conclusions or theories to be developed by the researcher (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). For this study, the gender discrimination patterns allow the researcher to understand some of the barriers existent for millennial women in the workplace.

4.4. Research methods

The research is classified into three different types: quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The quantitative is related to the numerical data; the qualitative is related to words data; and the link between the two approaches in the mix-methods (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, it's important to comprehend their characteristics to select the most appropriate one.

The researcher decided to focus this study on the **qualitative approach**, which aims to obtain insights based on the participants' experiences. The participants' experience is important for this research because is through them that the researcher aims to understand if the barriers millennial women are facing in the workplace are still related to perceived gender discrimination practices. The quantitative research method is not suitable for this study because only involves numerical analysis of data to explore, test and observe relationships between variables (Quinlan *et al.,* 2015), which not allow the researcher to obtain different insights and interpretation of the facts aims to clarify the phenomena.

The qualitative research method can be described as the non-numeric collect data that express the understandings, feelings and ideas (Quinlan *et al*., 2015). In qualitative research, words and images may be more important to collect the data since represents multiple meanings than numbers, also

qualitative research tends to use non-probability sampling techniques (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Creswell (2009) suggests that qualitative data is the connection between the researcher's background, the circumstances or previous knowledge to the way that interprets what is seen, heard or understood. Additionally, the method supports the researcher to discover evidence and thereafter detect new issues (Neuman, 2014), based on questions such as how and what and on different points of view of individuals related to the circumstances and activities (Leavy, 2017).

In addition, Saunders *et al.* (2019) claim that an exploratory study enables the researcher to make open questions, that are more flexible and adaptable, allowing the researcher to acquire more knowledge related to the research topic. Bansal, Smith and Vaara (2018) relate qualitative research to the different manners to answers the main question, such as body language and visual contact. In this view, the qualitative approach focuses on the quality of research, generally used to clarify an issue or phenomenon (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). In this sense, the approach of this study is exploratory and no hypothesis or suppositions needed to be tested in this research. As a further matter, the circumstances are subjective and the approach takes into consideration the perceptions and interpretations of the facts aims to clarify the phenomena.

To summarize, the qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate to answer the research question of this study because it will allow the researcher to get deeper answers and different insights, through the interpretation of the analysis in order to focus on the participants' feelings, thoughts and experiences related to the challenges faced by females in the workplace.

It's important to identify that this approach presents limitations such as lack of rigour in the data collection and practical difficulties (Mukhopadhyay and Gupta, 2014), but these limitations are overcome by their strengths. Additionally, similar studies that focus on the same subject, commonly extract the data from quantitative research (Eagly and Karau, 2002). The researcher aims to develop new insights on the challenges faced by females in the workplace, based on the participants' experiences which is more restrict and not possible to be compared in the quantitative approach, in this regard, qualitative research is the most suitable to support this research (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

4.5 Research strategy

Research strategy is described by Saunders *et al.* (2019) as the planning that determines how the answers for the research question will be given aim to achieve the research goal. Taking into consideration the approach adopted to this research (interpretivism philosophy, inductive approach and qualitative method), the most suitable research strategy for this study is the **interview survey.** Despite Saunders *et al.* (2019) suggest that survey strategy is principally linked to the quantitative method, it's not exclusive to this approach being possible to combine with different methods such as the interview. A survey aims to give information about subjective and objective characteristics of a population and is a method developed to collect the data through observations, attitudes, feelings, experiences, behaviours and opinions of a group of people (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Furthermore, survey is a form of interviewing key informants that are selected on purpose aim to provide rich data to the researcher (Hox and Boeije, 2005). The interview survey will enable the author to explore the collected data through an initial open coding, which will be explored further in the data analysis section, aim to establish links between categories and identify new ideas or concepts that emerged from the data.

4.6 Sampling and Recruitment

For this study, **a non-probability sampling technique** aligned to **a purposive frame** will be used, since the researcher is choosing the participants of the research as they are believed to be a better fit for the study, based on their personal experiences, characteristics and perceptions (Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

Sampling can be described as the "who or what is in study?", that may be the people that contribute to the research, the subjects or participants and it's also a choice of the process of people from a broad population (Leavy, 2017). According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), the researcher has two options of technique for defining the sampling tool: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In non-probability sampling, the elements are chosen based on suppositions or subjective judgements (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, purposive sampling is generally used when the sample size is small such as in this research and is also used when the researcher select the cases that are particularly more informative aims to answer the research question (Saunders *et*

al., 2019). While the sampling technique is more convenient, it doesn't mean that the research question will be determined. The non-probability sampling may be limited since the selection of the samples are based on judgement, being necessary a deeper study to acquire a rich content (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The sampling technique was chosen because it allows the participants to express their experiences, impressions, beliefs and points of view based on what is considered more important to them. The focus of the sampling strategy is to investigate the contrasting of beliefs and points of view, although all the participants are females from the same generation, all of them had different backgrounds and experiences, which will contribute to answering the research question.

For this research, a total of five females from the millennial generation that is currently working in the administrative sector in Ireland were selected as a sample to this research, where they were requested to answer nineteen open-ended questions on a voluntary basis, in a structured interview. The questions for this research was based on previous studies that focused on gender barriers such as stereotype and motherhood, however, with necessary adjustments to the millennial generation for a more sustainable outcome. The millennial generation was chosen as the target group for this research because they are the new generation prevailing in the workforce nowadays. Also, millennials may have a different perception than the previous generations related to the perceived challenges faced by females in the workplace. Thus, previous research that has been undertaken in Ireland has focused on middle or high leadership positions, but none has focused on lower positions.

A brief description of the participants was provided below (see table 1):

Table 1: Participants' description

ID	NATIONALITY	AGE	MARITAL STATUS/FAMILY	YEARS IN THE COMPANY	INTERVIEWED
P1	Brazilian	27	Single	2	Online
P2	Brazilian	27	Single	11months	Online
P3	Polish	30	Married	2	Online
P4	Irish	30	Single	3	Online
P5	Irish	31	Married; 2 children	3	Online

The selection of the five participants that were chosen to be interviewed was based on their age, marital status and if they had children, in order to present qualified outcomes according to their work-family experience. The respondents' age was also an important factor since it reflected their work experience, therefore the researcher selected the participants considering they had at least five years in the labour market. Furthermore, due to time constraints, the researcher decided to keep the sample of interviewees below ten aim of gaining deep content. After a pre-selection of the most suitable participants for this study, the researcher invited the participants through email explaining the purposes of this study. Moreover, the researcher highlighted the importance of the master's dissertation in that field where the millennials are the new generation in the workforce and may have a different perception of the challenges faced by them.

4.7 Data collection and procedures

To accomplish the purpose of this research and answer the research question, the process and tools for the data collection need to be adequate for a qualitative approach. In qualitative research such as this one, the principal technique to obtain the necessary data is through interviews, which can be conducted by one researcher or a group. Therefore, the author decided to collect the data through a **structured interview** with **open-ended questions,** in order to achieve rich information and identify possible issues or extra content that may not be explored in this research.

The interview technique requests different abilities such as make the participant feel more comfortable, looking for details without causing any discomfort for the participant, stimulating the participants to talk freely and being impartial as much as possible during the process (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Nonetheless, it's also necessary to listen to the participants carefully and pay attention to collect relevant information (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). While the quantitative method searches the result by numbers, in the qualitative method the interview technique search to explore the human interaction between the interviewer and the participants (Englander, 2020). Furthermore, interviews give voice to the participants to freely express in their own way their life experiences (Kvale, 2006).

According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), a structured interview applies pre determinate identical questions to every participant and analyse their answers based on pre-coding. Also, a structured

interview permits to analyse the different answers, considering as real the ones which are repeated the most (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Moreover, usually, structured interviews use open-ended questions that aim to conduct the order of the questions and determinate how they can be asked (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Nonetheless, open-ended questions are helpful when the researcher prefer that the participants answer the questions in a more free way (McMillan and Weyers, 2010). To summarise, as this study seeks to explore the challenges faced by millennial women in the workplace, the interview allows the participants to speak freely and share their own experience about the topic, taking into consideration the participants behaviour (Kvale, 2006). For this study, the interviews were conducted online through video calls, taking between twenty to thirty minutes, thus the online interview was chosen because of the Covid-19 scenario and it enables the research to access and collect data in an easy way, since it allows the researcher to schedule the interview at any time and with the necessary precautions. Moreover, the author was given permission from each participant to record the interviews, allowing a straightforward transcription to start the data analysis.

4.8 Pilot Study

The purpose of a pilot test is to identify if there is a necessity to refine the questionnaire so the participants will not have any issues in answering the questions, thus the pilot test is also to ensure that the data collected will permit that the research questions are answered (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Prior to start interviews with the participants, a pilot interview was performed with an impartial millennial woman with the purpose of understanding if the questionnaire had any potential issues with interpretation, clarity and to settle the estimated time of the interview (Robson, 2011). Resulting from the pilot experiment one question was delated as potential duplicate; one question was added to ensure a better flow between the questions in the interview; and another five questions were reworded and refined because it was unclear or was ambiguous to the participants. The interview took the expected time to be conducted, thus the pilot study was essential for the researcher to optimised the time since all the adjustments required were made before presenting the questions to the participants in the interview.

4.9 Data analysis

To understand the phenomena under study, the author decided to analyse the data through **thematic analysis.** Thematic analysis is an appropriate method to identify key themes and comprehend patterns in qualitative data that can be explored by the author aims to address a conclusion for the research question (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyse and delineated patterns or themes in the data, organizing and describing the data gathered in detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The analysis started with the transcription of the interviews aims to facilitate the coding process. Coding is a process that compares and identify the similarities and divergences that gives consistency to the analysis and the coding data (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Firstly, the researcher explored the data gathered based on open coding, creating linkages between categories. All the participants expressions and sentences were analysed and key responses and repeated answers were highlighted in different colours aim to assist the categorisation. Through the thematic analysis, codes were generated and organized into distinguished groups based on the research questions. After all interviews were coded, main themes and sub-themes were developed creating linkages among the experience of the interviewees and the literature review, highlighting the main assumptions that emerged in the analysis aiming to answer the sub-questions presented in this study.

4.10 Ethical considerations

Ethics is described by Leavy (2017) as the character which includes honesty, justice and integrity, and it's also what conduct individuals to comprehend the difference among what is right and wrong. In this view, the principles of the researcher are what connect to the research process aim to take decisions and act ethically. However, studies that deal with human participants can be risky, since they can generate discomfort or embarrassment within the participants, demonstrating the necessity to protect the participants' rights. For this reason, it's essential to put in place ethical codes that can address ethical dilemmas, based on principles that will protect the respondents from any damage (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2005).

Ethical considerations for this study has the purpose to delineate the guidelines that were considered by the researcher managing the study to prevent any ethical issues, reducing any possible negative effects involving the participants. Thus, all the material produced was confidential and all the participants' names will be kept anonymous aim to guarantee information security. All the participants were contacted by email with a request to take part in the research, and subsequently, an informed consent form (presented in Appendix I) was attached to the email outlining the study purpose and objectives, their awareness of the nature of the study and the confidentiality commitment. Nonetheless, the consent form explains the research's aims and the guidelines taken into consideration related to data collection and privacy, consequently, the consent form must be signed by all the respondents and by signing they are agreeing with all the terms and conditions.

4.11 Limitations

This section aims to address the constraints of the research that may impact the final results. The first limitation to be considered is the **sample profile**. It's important to acknowledge that the sample has individuals from different countries, languages, cultures, age, sectors and organizations. The context of where the respondents' works and the cultural background might affect the consistency of the results. For instance, the concept of gender discrimination may be perceived differently according to each individual background.

The **method chosen** by the author can be considered subjective in nature as the data consists of the reliability and validity of the questions (Cohen, Manion and Morison*, 2007)*. The lack of interviewing people and samples from the smaller scale can be considered as another limitation of this method to collect data as the limit of time to interview more participants, suggesting that a sample of five millennial women may not be representative of the larger population of the challenges they face in the workplace.

 Despite these limitations, the chosen method was considered the most suitable by the author to guide this study, as in the qualitative method the researcher is looking to understand the experiences through questions, words and pictures (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Nonetheless, the participants' characteristics, culture and background are the main keys of this study, and due to

some superficial answers, the challenges faced by women in the workplace may not be present for them since the work scenario has changed considerably.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a description and analysis of the data gathered. Key factors identified in the responses of the interviews conducted will be analysed and explored in detail, making a connection between the main theme and sub-themes and principal elements of the literature. The data will answer the challenges and barriers faced by millennial women in the workplace through the participants' lived experiences.

5.2 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Interviews were held with five millennial women participants in the administrative sector in Ireland, which provide a reasonably homogenous group for the research. In order to protect and maintain the commitment to participant confidentiality, the name of all five participants has been anonymised. They were named P1 (Participant 1) to P5 (Participant 5).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

ID	NATIONALITY	AGE	MARITAL STATUS/FAMILY	YEARS IN THE COMPANY	INTERVIEWED
P1	Brazilian	27	Single	2	Online
P2	Brazilian	27	Single	11months	Online
P3	Polish	30	Married	2	Online
P4	Irish	30	Married; 2 children	3,5	Online
P5	Irish	31	Single	5	Online

5.3 Emergent themes and sub-themes

Through the analysis was possible to identify codes that emerged in the interviews process (Saunders *et al.*, 2019), where was possible to compare and organize them into more abstract categories, being possible to establish each of the themes and sub-themes below. Each of these sub-themes will be analysed in this chapter with quotes from the millennial women that were interviewed.

Table 3: Main themes and sub-themes

Main Themes	Sub-themes
Gender discrimination	Stereotypes
	The challenges of being a woman in the workplace
	Gender pay gap
	Impacts of gender discrimination
Career progression	Opportunities and challenges for career progression
	Necessary characteristics for career progression
Challenges of the millennial generation	The perception of gender discrimination by millennial
	Organizational culture and gender discrimination
	Millennials challenges of work and life

The sub-themes reflect participants' experiences and narratives about discriminatory barriers faced by them in the workplace taking into consideration their genders. Each of the sub-themes will be explored in detail below, describing the participants' personal experiences by using quotations from their interviews.

5.4 Gender discrimination

5.4.1 Gender stereotypes

Through data analysis of the barriers faced by women in the workplace, gender stereotype was a strong theme that emerged from the interviews. All of the five participants believe that women are

still stereotyped in some way that may contribute to gender discrimination, nonetheless the participants described their perceptions of man stereotypes for them and how this can contribute to gender inequality in the workplace.

Three of the participants' perceptions of gender stereotypes align with the findings of Heilman (2012) and Ramaci *et al*. (2017), that women are still seen as overly emotional in the workplace. P3 believes that "men think that they're less emotional and because we have all those hormones problems and our period we get our emotions to think". Reflecting a similar view, P3 state "men think is complicated to work with women because they're too emotional or sometimes can take things personally". Additionally, P1 described:

> Women tend to be raised to show their feelings and show that they're sensitive
> while men can never show their feelings, they're seen as cold and strict.

Furthermore, the women stereotype is also associated with always seen as prioritizing and supporting family first instead of work commitments (Ellemers, 2018). P5 points out that " I feel that people presume that you are the main caretaker and they're your main priority and not the job", she also related this to the recent situation of working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic:

> I think people assume that they're minding their kids, whereas that would not be
> assumed with men, like men might have their kids at home too, but nobody's
> making jokes about them.

For P1 and P2 gender stereotypes is a cultural problem, where as stated by P2 "The whole history always put men as the head of the house bringing money into the house and woman always stay at home cooking, cleaning, taking care of the kids". In the same view, P4 expresses that men are seen as:

> More focused, because they [do] not run back home to children and more
> experienced and committed to the job possibly than what a female would be
> because of, the generational of a woman is that she's at home when she's not
> working.

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5.4.2 The challenges of being a woman in the workplace

The topic of challenges faced by the participants due to bias and disparate treatment related to the gender difference in their current and previous workplaces was discussed. The majority of the participants didn't feel that they have been discriminated in their current employers, however, some of them had experienced some bias in previous jobs.

Women can face multiple challenges in the workplace just because of their gender, which can be perceived as gender discrimination (Rawat and Mathew, 2021). In terms of her own experience, P4 points out that in her current workplace the disparate treatment is not directly from her employer or colleagues, but from the customers:

> It's a man that owns the business I worked for, but he doesn't take anything to do with the day to day running of the business but we would have a lot of men particularly that will only deal with him, that will happen quite a lot.

Nevertheless, the majority of the participants claim to have experienced different challenges related to their gender at some point in their life in previous jobs. These challenges are not only related to their job but also to the way they dress and behave to be accepted in the workplace, and sometimes this type of discrimination is not perceived by women as described by P1:

> I worked for an area where we were 40 people and I was the only woman, and when arriving at the office, all the man was staring at me, just because of the way I was dressed and I felt that my opinion was not enough, they would ask my work partner before asking me. At that time I felt like it was because I was younger, but now I can see that it wasn't.

P2 related a similar experience to P1:

> While working in the industrial tools field in Brazil, I had to go to clients and show them some products. Many times I was overlooked by them and I remember one engineer guy saying to my colleague [that] you cannot sell this kind of things because you're a woman.

Nonetheless, supporting Ridgeway (2001) findings, the male is still perceived as more competent in the workplace. Three of the participants feels that women need to work harder than man to be

recognized at their jobs. P1 states that " you have to prove yourself twice, or even more because you're a woman and you have to prove yourself like more than the others would have to do". P3 affirms that:

> Sometimes being a woman, you have to try harder to prove, especially when you're on projects full of men you have to try so much harder than them just to prove you're good enough that you can do this, to go through all those funny jokes, which are not funny at all.

Moreover, P2 also relates that *"to some people, especially men, women are treated as less than they're in theory, like inferior or not capable of doing the same work as they do"*. This feeling is shared by P4 that have experienced this when dealing with clients *"If it's not important, they're happy enough to deal with us, but if it's extremely important, then they want to do with the owner"*.

5.4.3 Gender pay gap

Gender discrimination is also related to the wage pay gap, where women can be perceived with less merit in the labour market and consequently get lower payment than men (Auspurg *et al.*, 2017). Interestingly, only P4 related to having experienced different wages than male colleagues in her previous job because of her maternity leave. P4 affirms that:

> In my experience, they blamed the fact that I was going to have a child as to why I was not given a substantial pay rise. That was the one time that a male colleague was being paid more than what I was for doing. I have been there longer than him and he was still getting paid in excess of what I was.

However, even a participant that is not a mother acknowledge that maternity can be a barrier to equal pay. The same was punctuated by P1 when asked if she believes that men got higher payments than women: "Yes, we have different salaries, I think especially because of maternity". Moving beyond, P4 affirms that besides she had experienced such payment inequality in her previous job, this doesn't occur in her current job:

I think we're all fairly paid for what we do and there are lots of little incentives that make a nice place to work. I think the general consensus is that a lot of companies are trying to make it more equal.

While P2 and P5 affirm that they don't think gender still affects wage inequality in their workplace, P3 supports the findings that women might be unconscious of the pay gap between the genders Major (cited in Auspurg *et al.*, 2017).

To be honest with you, it's hard to know, because the money you earn is not something which you share, especially if you know that you earn more than other people. So sometimes, you're not necessarily aware of it at the moment. So I cannot say I went through something like this because no, I have no idea if I did (P3).

Interestingly, through the narratives of these participants, it becomes clear that only the participant that has children experienced inequalities in payment due to maternity leave, while most of the individuals don't have experienced or believes that gender pay gap is not an issue in their current jobs.

5.4.4 Impacts of gender discrimination

Gender discrimination still impacts women's lives and their careers negatively, however, in contradiction with the findings in the literature review, most of the participants' doesn't perceive gender discrimination as a barrier that affects them personally at their current jobs.
P3 affirms: "At the moment, I don't think it does. I don't feel that problem in my workplace, , but well obviously I'm aware of the problem." In addition, P5 highlight:

Honest, I don't think it affects me that much, definitely not in work. I think I'm taken seriously and I'm treated no different than my male counterparts, or the males that are on the same level as me, even by the males that are working under me, I don't feel like I'm treated much differently.

Nonetheless, P4 confirm saying *"No, currently I don't think it does, in my workplace everything is fairly equal"*. On the other hand, P1 believes that gender discrimination doesn't affect her because she's aware of the problem and can avoid this in some way:

> I think because I'm aware of the situations and always reading and studying, I don't give space for that. So whenever I feel that some situation is upcoming, I would impose and speak for myself.

P4 believes that gender discrimination is something that with time you just accept for what it's, supporting the findings of Insch, McIntyre and Napier (2008) that women always need to be conscious of their gender in a male-dominated world:

> I'm not going to change that person's outlook, no matter how much you say to them, I'm not going to change gender discrimination of my own (P4).

5.5 Career progression

5.5.1 Opportunities and challenges for career progression

Career progression has a link between gender discrimination and inequalities in the workplace. Women may face more challenges to progress in their careers than men would, and this can be due to stereotypes and the perception of women as less efficient due to the combination of work and family (Uysal and Ak 2020).

Three out of five participants confirm that they have opportunities to progress in their careers with their current organizations while the two other participants affirm that it's not possible to progress since they work for small organizations. P2 punctuates that her current employer is *"always bringing new courses or ways to develop and they first try to hire new roles internally and then externally"*.

The theme "challenges faced by women to progress in their careers" was a key point to understand whether gender discrimination is still connected to the barriers present to women advance in their careers. P1 related she perceive that some of these challenges to progress can be due to her gender:

> You have to prove yourself more times than a man would have to do, having always to be right, in a good mood and never make a mistake, so you have to be perfect.

Supporting the findings of Cook and Glass (2014), P1 complements saying that one of the challenges she perceives women faces to progress is the lack of female role models in leadership position:

> From my previous experience, all the bosses were men, so how can you see yourself in a management position? If there is like, no examples? I think you would not even try.

Motherhood is another challenge throughout career progression for women. P4 as the only participant with children confirms

> I find that women are massively disadvantaged for going off on maternity leave. I have been off [on] maternity leave, and your salary decreased massively and it would not even be half of what I would earn by the mile. But you do always worry, If I'm going off on another maternity leave, will my job still be there?'. In my previous job, there was not one female manager, and it does make you think, are they looking for males for the reason that they think they're more reliable, because they aren't going to have kids, not the same as a woman and they're going to be there all the time?.

P1 also believes that motherhood is a barrier to career advancement:

> Because of maternity, they will hire someone that wouldn't take maternity leave, like a man. I heard stories that when hiring they would ask when the woman is planning to have kids or if she's married, but they would never ask a man about that.

5.5.2 Necessary characteristics for career progression

Certain characteristics are stereotyped and seen as necessary for women to progress in considered male positions such as toughness and agency characteristics. Surprisingly, the majority of the participants didn't relate any of these characteristics as the necessary ones to be promoted.

P5 states that to get promoted is necessary to be "a really good communicator, a good thinker of a problem solver and work harder". P4 also highlights characteristics such as "be reliable, good timekeeping and good communication skills". P2 complements "Focus, efficiency and always be honest and collaborative". P3 also points out that is necessary to "work hard enough and always trying to learn new things even without being asked for it". P1 was the only participant that associated male stereotyped characteristics as the necessary ones to be promoted in the workplace:

> I think we have to be really strict, you cannot show your emotions. I think you
> have to be this type of woman that is bossy, and really hard on the others so they
> will take you seriously.

5.6 Challenges of the millennial generation

5.6.1 The perception of gender discrimination by millennials

Gender discrimination in the workplace has gained more voice through the years due to different perceptions that each generation has about it. Millennials may consider some attitudes or behaviours in the workplace as discriminatory and offensive, which may cause a different experience for them.

P5, for instance, described a situation that her sister that is a millennial with 40 years old has experienced. Even in a senior role, she would be asked by her manager to make tea for the guests, which was perceived as offensive and discriminatory for her:

> She was working there 10 years longer than her male colleague, they [her
> colleagues] were sitting there doing nothing and her manager was coming out of

his office to ask her to go to make the tea just because he didn't want to insult
the man to make them tea.

P2 highlights *"The environment we grow up is different"* and this viewpoint is complemented by P4 saying:

I don't think the past generation would have seen that as gender discrimination.
I think it's a little different, things didn't have labels, the man would go to work
and the women stayed at home and they just think that as normal.

To summarize, the above statements suggest that the perception of what is considered gender discrimination has been changing through generations, and women still need to face some discriminatory attitudes in the workplace that was considered normal for past generations.

5.6.2 Organizational culture and gender discrimination

It has been recognized that changes in organisational culture are critical to reducing gender discrimination practices in the workplace (Kartolo and Kwantes, 2019). Thus, to obtain gender equality in the workplace, organizations have been promoting diversity programs and including different legislations that aim to reduce discriminatory practices and help women to progress in their careers.

Interestingly, most of the participants affirm that there are no supports in their organizations that are specifically designed to help women to progress. P1 and P4 believe this can be because they work for small companies, however, P4 complements *"Even in the company I worked in previously, which was a bigger company, there wouldn't have been anything for women"*. P3 and P5 confirm that they're not sure if the company they work for have any sort of program that can help women to progress as stated by P3 *"I've never heard about any, like leadership programme or anything like that."* Despite the lack of program that is specifically designed to women progress in their career, most of the participants agreed they feel supported by their organizations in some way, P2 claim *"They're always trying to improve their ways to develop myself"*. Furthermore, P4 described feeling supported on her maternity leave:

I went off [on] maternity leave and we're only subject to statutory maternity leave, but even though my company don't have extra maternity pay, they did still give me a monthly payment.

This observation highlights despite the importance of the organization role to minimize gender discrimination in the workplace, most of the participants confirm they don't know any existing program in their organization that aims to promote gender equality or that helps women to progress in their careers.

5.6.3 Work-life balance challenges

Women have changed not only their career goals through generations, but also their life ambitions and expectations, resulting in different challenges faced by them and different perceptions of work-life balance.

Through the narratives of these individuals, it becomes clear that women don't have only family as their main priority in life anymore and value flexibility at work (PwC, 2011) as state by P3:

We're now being independent, working full time, is harder for us to decide to have a family, for example, which was so obvious for our grandma's. Now it's harder to just choose what do I want to go to have in my career?. But also, I want to have a proper balance, you know, when work is important, but at the same time, my life after work is very important. So I do my work as good as I can, it's very important for me to keep the balance and have life after work, and not to be fully focused about my career.

Without family as the main priority and with the increase of women in the workforce, the challenges now can be related to independence as P1 states *"My main ambition is to be financially independent, to be able to travel around and explore other countries"*. P5 after bought a house and achieved her first goal, also confirms that travel is another priority *"I love travelling so we will put that towards the house"*.

Nonetheless, P4 in terms of her own experience as a working mother, points out that one of the big challenges is to balance her work duties as a part-time worker:

> So if I'm going back into work on a Monday, it's a constant catch up. It's hard
> to follow things through, and also sometimes you can feel like you're just not
> part of the workplace.

To summarize, the above statements suggest that women are facing different challenges now to have a work-life balance and prioritize other aspects in life that is not necessarily related to work and family.

6. Discussions

The main objective of this study was to further investigate the theoretical and empirical insights to answer the following questions:

1. What type of discrimination do women face in the workplace?
2. What are the barriers faced by women in the administrative sector for career advancement?
3. What are the challenges faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace?

The discussion chapter will be guided around these questions, evaluating conflicting results and unexpected findings.

6.1 Different discriminations faced by women in the workplace

The findings of discrimination against women in the workplace identified in the study had found that when it comes to gender discrimination, many participants' related discriminatory practices as attitudes that they believe is still persistent through generations rather than their own experienced. Discriminatory social attitudes are strongly related to gender stereotype, agreeing with the findings of Haines, Deaux and Lofaro (2016) who points out that gender stereotype is a cultural issue and is persistent to change through the decades. This research had found that women believe they are still seen as overly emotional in the workplace, thus such stereotypes can create beliefs that women can take things personally or is not tough enough to be considered to leadership positions and that women tend to put their emotions first when is necessary to make a decision as

stated by P3. These findings are in agreement with DeArmond *et al.* (2006) study that relates women being often associated as emotionally unstable and weak in the workplace.

One other element that can be seen in this study that is also discussed by authors in our literature review is the stereotype of women been constantly associate as the main caretaker of the family. For Ellemers (2018), women tend to prioritize and support the family instead of work, affecting women career advancement. These findings correspond with the interviews which at some point all the participants confirm that women are constantly associated as performing the majority of domestics and caretaker roles, demonstrating nurturing attributes (Hentschel, Heilman and Peus, 2019). P5, for instance, emphasizes how women are always seen as prioritizing to have a family and children and how this is associated as their main goal in life while this is not seen with men. Nonetheless, P4 punctuates that women are expected to be at home when she is not working while men can be more committed at work since it's not usually associated as the main caretaker of the family.

As defined by Janssen, Sartore and Backes-Gellner (2016) discriminatory social attitudes also include prejudiced customers that don't want women to assist them in some situations. The P2 and P4 cases demonstrated that gender discrimination was experienced when dealing with the company's customers, therefore they felt they didn't want to be assisted by them because of their gender. As such, in concordance, Rawat and Mathew (2021) defined gender discrimination as any distinct treatment between genders. In accordance with this viewpoint, P2 points out how women can be less recognized in work due to being in a male dominant field. Therefore, the case of P2 and P4 show the importance of identifying gender discrimination in small attitudes and behaviours that not always may be perceived as discrimination but as cultural beliefs.

One significant barrier that emerged from the data analysis is the feeling women have that they need to constantly prove themselves and work harder than a man to be evaluated and recognized at their jobs as punctuated by Insch, McIntyre and Napier (2008). Through the narratives of the research participants, it became clear that women may feel inferior or treated as less than they are when compared to men, especially when in a male-dominated environment, justifying the necessity of proving themselves harder, just to show they are capable to do the same work as they do. P1, for instance, emphasizes her opinion was not enough or taken seriously when working as the only woman in the team, as highlighted by Insch, McIntyre and Napier (2008), is always need to be conscious of being a woman in a male-dominated world. That is why the researcher disagrees

with Heilman (2001) and Eagly and Karau (2002) when they state that only women in leadership positions are perceived as less effective, since, in practice, the participants describes this as an issue for most positions of women in the workplace.

However, other interesting findings were also obtained. When it comes to payment inequality, most of the participants don't think men get higher payments than women, or at least, this is not experienced at their current workplace, but they are aware this may still happen in other organizations. Bishu and Alkadry (2016) informed that the wage pay gap can be justified by women being denied career opportunities when compared to men in the market. . In contrary to this affirmation, P5 for instance affirms that she just got promoted to a supervisor position and believes she is not getting pay less than her male partner. On the other hand, co-workers don't compare and congrats their earnings openly, thus, as punctuated by P3, women may not be aware or conscious of the pay gap between genders as reported by Auspurg *et al.* (2017). The inaccessibility to payment information might be a barrier that leads women to be unaware of the gender pay gap in organizations. Nonetheless, the wage gap is more likely to be perceived in motherhood cases. Janssen, Sartore and Backes-Gellner (2016) suggest that women tend to opt for family friend jobs that can be combined with their family responsibilities, while this is not seen with men. Supporting this viewpoint, P4 punctuated to have opted for a part-time job aim to conciliated her responsibilities with work and family, however, she recognized some consequences such as salary reduction due to less days worked and less work experience. Additionally, P4 have experienced slower growth in earnings due to time out of the labour market because of maternity leave as reported by Gangl and Ziefle (2009).

Gender discrimination in the workplace leads to multiple challenges and barriers that women need to face to progress in their career in many areas such as hiring, promotion and career opportunities as reported by Eagly and Carli (2007). Most of the participants' here interviewed described gender discriminatory practices as conceptual, relating such practices to attitudes rather than to their own experiences. Thus, this study's findings showed that all the participants don't feel that they were personally affected in their current jobs for being women, as highlighted by P5, she doesn't feel she is been treated differently than her male counterparts.

6.2 Barriers faced by women for career advancement in the administrative sector

As defined by Oakley (2000), women face invisible barriers to progress in their career, such as recruitment, promotion, stereotyping and leadership styles. Babic and Hansez (2021) add that, to women progress in their career they need to work harder than men. In agreement, P1 punctuates how women need to work harder in their roles to be recognized as good enough to be promoted. Also, P1 and P4 recognized the lack of female role models and the importance of a female mentor to support and reinforce women visibility in the workplace to progress to leadership positions, as reported by Cook and Glass (2014).

Moreover, one other element that can be seen in this study that is also discussed by authors on our literature review is the "motherhood myths". For Coreel, Benard and Paik (2007), the fact that women may become a mother at some point in her life, make them less likely to be considered for a job interview, impacting career opportunities. Verniers and Vala (2018) add that discriminatory practises can be also perceived in areas such as recruitment, rewards and performance evaluation due to motherhood. Supporting these findings, two of the participants interviewed believes women are massively disadvantaged because of maternity leave. The first barrier begins while in the recruitment stage, since women may not be selected just because of the fact they may become mothers, as punctuated by P1. As suggested by Janssen, Sartore and Backes-Gellner (2016), women are not conscious of these discriminatory barriers to entry into the market, since such practices start in the recruitment process. P4 also emphasizes how the period after the maternity leave may affect career advancement, since because of the time out of the labour market, women may perceive a decrease in salary and performance evaluation as experienced by her.

However, when it comes to characteristics needed to be promoted, most of the participants interviewed don't associate male stereotypes as necessary characteristics to progress in their careers. In contrary to the findings of (Hentschel, Heilman and Peus, 2019) that described women with communal characteristics such as kind and sensitive and Heilman (2012) when defining leadership and toughness as skills necessary to obtain success, the participants believe that to be promoted depends more on being efficient at work than showing male stereotyped characteristics such as being strict, bossy and not emotionally sensitive. P4 and P5 associated good communication skills as one of the characteristics needed to career progress, also characteristics such as reliable, problem solver, active and collaborative were identified as important to be

promoted by the participants. That is why the researcher disagrees with Cuddy, Fiske and Glick (2008) when they say that such characteristics make women seen as less competent, when, in fact, women competencies should be according to their work performance instead of their characteristics.

6.3 The challenges faced by millennial women in the workplace

Barnett *et al.* (2003) punctuated that millennial women are less worried about career-marriage conflicts. Through data analysis, it's clear that the perception of gender roles for millennial women is different from past generations, where men would go to work and women would stay at home as emphasized by P4. This generation is increasing their presence in the labour market and women from this generation face different challenges than the previous ones. With more opportunities for career advancement, P3 recognized that being more independent make it harder to decide when to have a family or instead focus on a career. As punctuated by Smith (2010), millennial women are prioritizing other aspects of life while delaying having children and start a family.

Despite millennial women be more focused on their career, as said by Twenge and Campbell (2012), they are less likely to sacrifice family and leisure in favour of work. In contrary to this affirmation, all of the participants interviewed didn't relate their life priorities to the family as suggested by Ellemers (2018) or to work. P1 and P5 affirm that to them be financially independent is important so they can reach other goals such as travelling and buy a house, for example. Also, P3 emphasizes the importance of not focusing only on her work by having a balance between work and life, as described by Durbin, Page and Walby (2017). For Vasumathi (2018), the importance of work-life balance policies in organizations, enable women to engage and contribute to the organization success. Cascio (2000) suggests that programs such as child care and counselling can help in the balance of the work-family of the individual. Ellwart and Konradt (2011) add that work-life balance can bring more commitment to their employees and job satisfaction. However, P4 highlight that one of the challenges, after she opted for a part-time job aim to have a better balance between work and family, is to have her salary reduced considerably.

Nonetheless, changes in organizational culture are crucial to reducing gender discrimination practices in the workplace with the inclusion of legislation and diversity programs as defined by Kartolo and Kwantes (2019). However, interestingly in contrary to the findings of Kartolo and

Kwantes (2019), this research had found that three of the participants interviewed affirm that there are no supports in their organizations that are specifically designed to help women to progress, and the other two are not sure if such support exists in their organizations. On the other hand, despite the lack of programs that are specifically designed to help women progress in their careers, most of the participants feel they are supported and treat equally in their organization, showing that the decrease of discriminatory practices may not be only connected to diversity programs but is also connected to the organizational culture. Moreover, Kartolo and Kwantes (2019) add that millennial women may have different perceptions and beliefs of what is gender discrimination when compared to previous generations, therefore Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich (2013) highlight the importance of equal opportunities and impartiality treatment in the workplace to reduce discriminatory practices. As such, in concordance with this viewpoint, most of the participants interviewed believes they have the same opportunities and equal treatment as the male gender.

7. Conclusion

This research was designed to explore the barriers and inequalities faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace. Specifically, it was a study that aimed to better understand the gender discriminatory practices that are still present in the workplace and the challenges millennial women faces to career progression.

In order to fulfil its goals, Ireland's administrative sector was chosen as the field of this investigation since previous research had a focus on other sectors. As seen throughout the document, the millennial generation plays an important role in the world because is entering the workforce in large numbers (PwC, 2011), justifying the option for this generation.

Gender discrimination is a topic that has been more discussed among the youngest generation, with the increase of women in the labour market and gaining more space and voice in the workforce, is undeniable the need for change in cultural practices that may be perceived as discriminatory for this generation. Millennial women have different aspirations and life goals than the previous generation, being more focused on career and work-life balance, they face different challenges than other generations.

As punctuated by Eagly and Carli (2007), gender discrimination is still experienced by women in different areas such as hiring, promotion and career opportunities. As such, this study hopes to

contribute to body research that generates knowledge emphasized helping millennial women reduce existent barriers in the workplace by being able to identify them.

The literature leaves no doubt that women still face gender discrimination in the workplace through recurring discriminatory practices in the administrative sector. However, it's not yet evident if these discriminatory practices are perceived the same way for millennial women than it was for the previous generation. Therefore, the lack of specific data supporting the subject reinforces the importance of the research.

Through the data analysis, it was possible to confirm the literature affirmation concerning gender stereotypes and career progression. One of the main findings is to see that regardless the generation, women still need to work harder than men just to prove they are capable and good enough at work, showing that gender stereotype is still present for women. The lack of female role models is also another important finding because it shows that millennial women still don't have enough representation in leadership positions, making it harder to have inspiration to progress in the career. In addition, the main finding of this research identified and mentioned by all the participants at some point, is that women are stereotyped as the responsible for family duties and main caretaker. Surprisingly even the participants with no children believe that motherhood myths are a big challenge faced by them, due to the barriers in hiring, career progression and salary. Therefore, to mitigate the effects of women stereotypes and motherhood myths, it's necessary to change persistent attitudes and beliefs in cultural organizations.

In addition, some surprising findings were obtained in this study. In contrary to the literature review, participants in this study don't consider that they are experiencing gender payment inequality in their current jobs. Also, participants don't believe they are harmed due to their gender in any area of their jobs, which may not necessarily indicate that gender barriers are decreasing, but that some discriminatory practices might have been normalized and not recognized as gender discrimination.

It's important to highlight that despite the respondents confirming they are not facing any gender discrimination now, all of them are aware this is a real problem that many millennial women still face in their workplace. Some of the participants declared that they had never experienced such gender discrimination, but it's important to highlight that the researcher noticed on their expressions during the interview that some questions made them wonder if certain situations they experienced could have been related to gender-discriminatory practices but was not perceived by

them at the time. Thus, gender discrimination practices may persist through discriminatory attitudes that can be normalised in the workplace, making it difficult to be labelled as discrimination. Therefore, a qualitative method was appropriated method because allowed the researcher to analyse not only the answer but the participants' behaviour and reactions. As such, the research here presented achieved its goals, being able to show the different barriers millennial women still faces in the workplace by its sampling, presenting circumstances that punctuated gender discriminatory practices that still present to women and that create more challenges to career progression.

8. Recommendations for future research and limitations

During the development of the literature review, it was noticed a limitation to creating solid content relating to gender discrimination in the workplace and the millennial generation. Most of the existent literature discuss the barriers faced by women due to their gender in the workplace from previous generations, making it difficult to find evidence if these barriers are the same for the millennial generation. Therefore, the existent literature also doesn't focus on these barriers to the administrative sector. However, as mentioned in the findings, the participants don't think gender affect them in their current jobs, thus future research should also investigate different sectors.

Another limitation of the research is the sample size that was relatively small and doesn't represent all millennial women in the labour market. Nevertheless, considering that one of the main findings was related to motherhood, it will be interesting and beneficial to conduct a focus group of millennial women that had experienced motherhood, enabling more in-depth knowledge and gain further insights into this topic.

To conclude, this study was focused on barriers millennial women faces in the administrative sector in Ireland. It's important to conduct research that gathers significant data from different countries. It's essential to analyse the results according to each country due to cultural differences, race and contextual characteristics that may impact differently on the research results. For instance, gender discrimination may differ according to each region taking into consideration the premise that gender discrimination practices are not the same and can be intensified due to racial discrimination. Therefore, it would be important to analyse the different circumstances of each nation.

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Appendix I

Exploring the barriers and inequalities faced by women from the millennial generation in the workplace.

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 consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree to my interview being audio and video recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a Master's Thesis of MSc on International Business course at National College of Ireland.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained until 18th August 2026.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview which contain any identifying material about me will be removed.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant   Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

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Signature of researcher   Date

Appendix II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opening questions

How old are you?

How long have you been with the current employer?

How long have you been working in the administrative sector?

Do you fell your company has an environment and a culture that support and value you?

What are your ambitions in relation to your career?

What challenges do you think you will have to face to achieve this?

Gender discrimination

Are women treated differently at your work place? Can you give an example?

What disadvantages or advantages do you associate with being a woman?

Why do you think men are treated preferentially compared to women?

What characteristics do men have (or we say they have) that make them "better"? more reliable? Tough, bossy, nice

Are these characteristics more compared to men stereotype?

In your opinion, do you think that men get higher payments to do the same job as a woman with the same qualifications?

How much do you think gender discrimination affects you personally ?

Career Progression

What opportunities are there for career progression/promotion?

What are the challenges to progress?

Do you fell your experience is related specific to your generation? If you are from a different generation you would have a different work experience?

Considering your career progression and promotion, do you think you are disadvantage based on your gender? How?

What characteristics do you think you need to have to be promoted?

Are there any supports in your organisation that are specifically design to help women to progress? (management and leadership programmes?)