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Ireland

**Capstone Project Dissertation**

**Is Nepotism Prevalent within Ireland Today and is the  
Overall Theory of Nepotism Ethical?**

*Author:*

*Alicia Fitzsimons*

*X18353293*

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## **Submission of Thesis and Dissertation**

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**Name:** Alicia Fitzsimons

**Student Number:** x18353293

**Degree for which thesis is submitted:** BA (Honours) in Business

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**Student ID:** X18353293  
**Programme:** BAHBMD4 **Year:** 4  
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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to determine the existence of nepotism in Ireland today and it also looks to investigate whether it is an ethical practice or not. To achieve this study a survey consisting of fifteen questions relating to nepotism was issued as a data collecting method. The survey was distributed to a small population of seventy-two people whereby all of the responses were used and analysed to contribute to this study. As this research is both quantitative and qualitative in nature, one interview was also conducted in order to gain a better overview of the overall research topic. The results of the research revealed that nepotism does in fact still exist within Ireland, but the hypothesis of whether it is ethical remains unproven due to the interpretive nature of this study.

## **Introduction**

This research project looks to investigate whether cases of nepotism are still occurring within the Irish workforce today and it also aims to determine the hypothesis of whether nepotism is an ethical practice or not. According to Kaushal (2021) nepotism is one of the least researched and most poorly defined human resource approaches and it is also known to have enormous effects on companies who hire staff. Since not enough in-depth research has been done on this particular topic it is important that it is investigated further so that more well-informed decisions can be made if cases of nepotism do occur within the workplace. Understanding nepotism as a whole will also help identify both its positive and negative effects on the workplace and its workers.

Scholars have defined nepotism as being an act of favouritism towards relatives, usually in the form of offering them jobs (Ragauskas and Valeškaitė, 2020). Cases of nepotism can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages where Catholic popes and bishops were often known to give their nephews powerful job positions within the church since they had no legitimate children of their own to pass their duties on to. This indicates that nepotism has existed in the world for a long time - whether cases of nepotism still occur nowadays is what this research project looks to explore and determine.

The term nepotism is often associated with both favouritism and cronyism, and is usually perceived as having mostly negative consequences on the workforce since it can be viewed as being a form of discrimination, although it is important to note that this is not always the case. Researchers have proved that there are many positive aspects linked with nepotism, for example Miller and Miller (2006) found that major, publicly traded family-controlled businesses actually outperform other types of businesses in which there is no form of nepotism present. The other major benefits associated with nepotism include giving family members the ability to spend more quality time with one another, reduced organisational costs, and it can also help create a high trust work environment where all employees share the same set of values and goals. Even though there are positives aspects associated with nepotism, whether it is deemed to be an ethical process still requires some investigating.

Nepotism can cause employees that are not friends or relatives to feel excluded and discriminated against at work. Ichniowski (1998) denotes that nepotism has the potential to decrease morale amongst employees as they may feel as though promotions are unfairly given to those who are less deserving. Contrary to the previous point regarding nepotism having the ability to decrease organisational costs, it can also have the opposite effect if the friend or family member who is hired is underqualified for the job and requires extra training.

The current position of this research views nepotism as being unethical as it implies that who you know is more valuable than what you know when it comes to job hunting. This contradicts everything we are taught about in regard to interview preparation as it indicates that no matter how best suited you are to a particular role, someone can still be favoured over you simply because they have the advantage of knowing or being related to someone within the field. Research completed by Fisher (2020) found that as much as 80% of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections, indicating that in most instances getting a job comes down to who you know. This is a completely unfair advantage, and it poses the question to whether it is even worth peoples' time applying for job positions that other current staff members' family or friends are also applying to.



This research project also looks to investigate current anti-nepotism laws implemented in Ireland and will examine the policies that are currently in place in organisations that intend to regulate nepotism. While there is a current lack of anti-nepotism laws in Ireland the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2011 outlaws any type of discrimination at work in all areas such as recruitment, promotion, equal pay, working conditions, training or experience, dismissal and harassment including sexual harassment (Department of Justice, 2022). This act should prevent cases of nepotism from occurring within the workplace, but oddly enough employers can also be perceived to be encouraging nepotism by having employee referral schemes in place whereby employees are rewarded for recommending a family member or friend for open job positions within the company. This research study will examine whether these types of referral schemes are ethical and will determine whether new policies should be created in order to protect employees from future improper use of nepotism.

This research project will adopt a mixed method approach in order to answer the overlying research question as it is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Undertaking a mixed method approach throughout this research will help to provide a more comprehensive picture of the research topic which would not be achieved by just using either quantitative or qualitative research techniques alone. It is important to obtain a comprehensive picture in this case as nepotism can be a sensitive subject for some people, which is why both surveys and interviews will be utilised in order to gain a better overview of the research topic.

## Literature Review

### Origins of Nepotism and its Current Presence in Ireland

Nepotism can be defined in many ways, Bellow (2004) defines nepotism to be a pervasive phenomenon in human organisations. In its simplest form, nepotism is when a person in power provides advantageous opportunities such as a job position to close friends and/or family members. The term nepotism originates from the Latin term “*Nepos*” which translates to nephew (Glare, 1996). Nepotism can extend beyond the familial link and is often associated with two other terms: favouritism and cronyism. Favouritism is when someone prefers one person or a group over another, which can in turn lead to them receiving better perks or opportunities. Cronyism describes situations where a person provides beneficial opportunities to their close friends aka, ‘cronies’.

Whether cases of nepotism, favouritism and/or cronyism are still occurring in today’s society is questionable as they can be extremely difficult to prove. If we examine the entertainment industry and look at the actor Jaden Smith for example, one of his first major lead movie roles was in the remake of “The Karate Kid” which was released in 2010. His already famously known parents, Will and Jada Smith were both the co-producers of this movie so it is only natural to wonder whether Jaden obtained the lead role for being the best child actor who auditioned for the part, or simply because his parents had the power to cast him over the other children who auditioned for the role. Another famous example discussed amongst writers is how ex-US President Donald Trump appointed his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, as a senior White House adviser only hours after he took his presidential oath (Schmidt *et al.*, 2017). The Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the time, Daniel Koffsky, wrote a 14-page detailed opinion explaining how federal nepotism laws did not apply in this case as the law only covers job positions appointed within an agency and in this case the White House is not classified as an agency. Regardless of this statement, the question still remains to whether Kushner was hired on the basis of his qualifications and previous work experience, or purely because of his close family relationship to the ex-President. An alleged case of cronyism also occurred in Ireland not too long ago when Taoiseach Micheál Martin appointed his friend/colleague Katherine Zappone as an UN envoy without conducting an open recruitment process for the role. According to writers, the Taoiseach received more than two dozen complaints regarding this job appointment with one email describing it as “cronyism at its finest” (Fuxe, 2021). This example in particular indicates that cases of nepotism/cronyism do in fact still occur within Ireland today.

There are currently very few laws preventing cases of nepotism from occurring within Ireland, but recently new anti-nepotism laws have been recommended as part of a major review of corruption and white-collar crime in the country (Ryan, 2020). This suggestion of the implementation of anti-nepotism laws indicates that nepotism still exist in today’s society, and also illustrates that it is a re-occurring issue within Ireland. The lack of active anti-nepotism laws is mainly due to the difficulties that come along with trying to prove accusations of nepotism. Just because a colleague is related to someone in power within the company does not always mean that it is a case of nepotism, the employee may genuinely be the best suited candidate for the position. In order to ensure that it is a legit case of nepotism, Indeed (2022) lists the following mannerisms to watch out for in the workplace:

1. A friend or relative who is hired but is under-qualified.
2. A friend or relative who is hired and constantly evades punishment when they do something wrong.
3. A friend or relative who is hired and demonstrates unprofessional behaviours such as being rude to their colleagues and in turn does not face any consequences.
4. A friend or relative who is hired and receives better pay and/or promotions over other better suited employees.

If an employee wishes to report an alleged case of nepotism in the workplace they must file an official complaint with their Human Resources (HR) department. The employee must have valid supporting evidence in order to make a convincing case, which can be difficult to gather. For example how does one successfully prove they were unfairly passed over for a promotion if both themselves and the relative/friend in question have the same qualifications? Even if you undoubtedly know that your colleague received the promotion solely based on their close relations with another staff member, trying to find a basis on which to prove this can be quite problematic.

Each organisation has their own unique ways of how they conduct their recruitment processes, but they should all have the same equal opportunities policy in place outlining the company's promise to have unbiased views when it comes to hiring or promoting staff. These policies should prevent acts of nepotism and discrimination from occurring within the workplace. According to The Employment Equality Acts (1998), the prohibited grounds of discrimination include gender, civil status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community. Since there are currently no laws in effect preventing people in Ireland from hiring their friends and family members, then employers will continue to do it. In fact acts of nepotism are sometimes even seen to be encouraged by employers through the likes of promoting employee referral schemes for example.

Most large companies would have an employee referral programme in place, whereby current employees can refer or recommend their friends or family members for open job positions within the company. There is usually an incentive in place to encourage employees to participate in the scheme, for example an employee may be eligible to receive a bonus if they refer a person who gets hired by the company and continues to work for them for a set period of time. Referrals schemes can be beneficial for companies as they are more time and cost efficient compared to advertising positions on various job sites. It is also important to note that these referral programs can also lead to personal conflicts between colleagues as some employees may feel as though there is favouritism within the business (Donohoe, 2019).

Employers can also be accused of nepotism and/or favouritism if they fill a vacant position without the role being fairly advertised internally and externally. Although it is important to highlight that employers are not legally obliged to offer a role internally, nor does the employer have to advertise the role externally (Peninsula, 2013). Employers should also keep in mind that failing to advertise a role fairly can lead to lawsuit claims accusing the organisation of discrimination which can result in large fines and bad publicity for the company.

Employers sometimes have no choice but to partake in nepotism practices due to the limited number of workers available to them. According to Daly (2020), approximately 1.1 million

Irish people died and over 1 million more emigrated during the time of the Great Famine. This caused a great shortage of the amount of people who were willing and able to work in Ireland at that time, which made it more difficult for employers to find suitable candidates to fill vacant job positions. Therefore forcing them to hire family members and friends in order to prevent business closure, in this case nepotism was essential for their survival.

There are a lot of family-run business present in Ireland, in fact a report generated by DCU Business School (2020) shows that there are approximately 160,700 family-run businesses in the country, which works out to be approximately 64% of all businesses within Ireland. Fanagans Funeral Directors is an example of a well-established family-run Irish business. Since first opening their doors in 1819 they have maintained a family-run tradition, according to their website the fifth and sixth generation of the Fanagans family work in the business currently, namely Jody, David, Alan, Robert, and Peter Fanagan (Fanagans, 2022). If new anti-nepotism laws were implemented in Ireland this may result in family-run businesses such as Fanagans to become illegal, therefore forcing them to shut down. This would have serious repercussions on the Irish economy due to the fact that over half of the businesses here are run by families. This is an important factor to consider when trying to decide if anti-nepotism laws should be implemented in Ireland and whether the overall view of nepotism is positive or negative. It is understandable that those involved in family-run businesses would view nepotism in a positive light since it greatly benefits them, but the question of whether it is ethical or not still stands.

### **Positive Effects of Nepotism**

Many sources believe that nepotism is an ethical process that has multiple positive effects. Sheila Morris discusses the benefits of working alongside her family members throughout her Tedx Talk (2015) and refers to nepotism as being her version of the 'American dream'. She describes her unwealthy upbringing very fondly and remembers constantly being surrounded by her family members, but when her parents obtained well-paying jobs they began to fight often, and they soon found themselves to be extremely unhappy with their new lives. In an effort to repair their once close-knit relationship, her parents quit their jobs and decided to open a restaurant. Sheila and other members of the family were hired in order to assist with running it. They all found themselves to be much happier in general as working together gave them the opportunity to spend more time with one another and they were always available to help each other out if an unexpected incident occurred such as having to look after one of the children in the family. Sheila's story proves that good things can come from nepotism, working alongside family members allows relatives to spend more quality time with one another which they may not get if they were working separate jobs. Thiefels (2019) discusses how a family-run business can sustain itself across multiple generations, due to all employees having the same common goal of succeeding as both a family and a company. This shared goal keeps all staff motivated and in turn makes them more efficient, again proving that there are benefits that come alongside working with family members.

Trust between management and co-workers is critical for any business to succeed. Zak (2017) explains that people who are employed by companies where there is a high level of trust present are more productive, better at collaborating with others, and are less likely to leave the company. People are naturally more inclined to trust people that they know over strangers – it is the basis on how most of us are raised. This is why some people may feel more

comfortable hiring friends and family members over people they do not know. There is generally high levels of trust between both friends and family members, so if we reiterate Zak's (2017) statement regarding how high levels of trust between colleagues effect organisations in a positive way then it becomes clear that practicing nepotism may give companies a better competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Another positive aspect of nepotism that must be noted is that it may help to reduce overall organisational costs. As explained by Woods (2018), research completed by Adare Human Resource Management shows that the average recruitment process cost for a vacant role is €13,100. Hiring a friend or family member would help to decrease this figure as there may be no need to complete a regular extensive and formal recruitment and interview process unless required by senior management. If you believe a particular family member or friend is well suited to a role this may also lead to reduced needed training time and therefore overall business expenses will be lowered even further. Friends and relatives may also be willing to work longer hours for less pay compared to other third-party members as they are usually more invested in the success and running of the business. Organisations can then use the money saved to help grow and improve the company in order to achieve further competitive stance within the marketplace

These points indicate that nepotism does come with some advantages, but organisations must ensure that if they do decide to hire external candidates who are not family members or friends, that they focus on making them feel just as important and included in business decisions in order to prevent accusations of inequality and favouritism from occurring. Proctor (2022) recommends that companies should create and implement strong anti-nepotism policies which prohibits friends and family members from working in the same department or reporting to each other, this way cases of favouritism are less likely to occur. Managers should also try to create an environment where employees feel comfortable enough to report cases of nepotism if they do occur within the company.

### **Negative Effects of Nepotism**

Contrary, some writers have claimed that non-family members within a company feel as though there is a "glass ceiling", whereby they believe that senior job positions will always be given to other family members (Gleeson, 2016). This may result in highly talented potential candidates not applying for vacant roles and promotions and causing them feeling excluded, especially if work decisions are made at home outside of work hours. This is why family business owners should make a large effort to ensure that everyone in the business feels both included and equal in order to retain high morale within the company. They can do this by only making work decisions during the set daily working hours and encouraging other staff members to speak up if they feel left out in any way.

As mentioned previously, practicing nepotism can help to reduce overall business costs - this statement only remains true if conducted correctly. If an unqualified individual is hired solely on the premises of their relationship with someone within the organisation, then this could lead to more time and money having to be spent on training them. Hiring an unqualified person can have major negative effects on a company. "Poor performers lower the bar for other employees, and bad habits spread like a virus" (Fatemi, 2016). If employees notice that one of their colleagues are able to do things wrong with no consequences they may start doing the same, this will decrease overall efficiency in the workplace and will also reduce the

quality of work being completed. Giving authority to an unqualified person could also lead to high employee turnover and it could also create a negative company culture.

Another disadvantage of nepotism is that it prevents the workforce from being innovative and diverse. According to Zojceska (2018), companies with a more diverse workforce will have greater access to a variety of different perspectives, skills, and ideas which assists with the growth of the business. As discussed previously, family and friends usually share similar thoughts and beliefs to one another which can lead to a stagnation of new innovative and creative ideas. Compiling a team who come from an array of different backgrounds and cultures helps to promote the flow of new ideas and therefore helps to increase employee engagement and productivity within the workplace.

As you can see, cases of nepotism can lead to very harmful effects on a business which is why organisations need to seriously weigh up the pros and cons of hiring friends and relatives over other third-party candidates who may be better suited to the role.

## Research Question & Objectives

### **Research Question:**

Is Nepotism Prevalent within the Irish Workforce and is the Overall Theory of Nepotism Ethical?

### **Hypothesis:**

**(H<sub>1</sub>)** Nepotism is an ethical practice.

The purpose of this study is to determine if cases of nepotism are still occurring within Ireland today and also to determine the hypothesis of whether nepotism is an ethical practice. Not a lot of previous research has been conducted in this particular area which is why the overlying research question of this study requires further investigation. It is important that this topic is examined as in today's modern society everyone should always be treated equally and have the same opportunities as one another.

When cases of nepotism do arise, it can contradict the concept of equal opportunities for all and can also create a feeling of inequality amongst people which can lead to many problems within the workplace (Peninsula, 2022). One of the main objectives of this study is to minimise these potential problems which can result from nepotism. By examining whether cases of nepotism do occur within Ireland policies can then be created and implemented to ensure that if practiced it is done so in a professional and ethical manner in which favouritism does not transpire.

Another objective of this research study is to explore and highlight the negative effects of nepotism with the goal being to make employers more aware of the harmful consequences that can occur if they do decide to practice nepotism in the workplace. The positive effects of nepotism are equally as important to examine as practicing nepotism can lead to business succession in some cases such as Sheila Morris' (Tedx Talk, 2015). The literature review has implied that cases of nepotism are still occurring within Ireland currently (Fuxe, 2021), but it does not answer the question of whether it is an ethical practice or not. Thus, a mixed approach method will be adopted whereby both a survey and an interview will be conducted in order to try answer the overlying research question.

## **Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This section of the study focuses on the underlying philosophical assumptions and the research methods used to develop and expand the research. In addition, this section will also discuss the nature of the work, data collection and analysis methods used, and limitations to the research.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether cases of nepotism occur amongst the Irish workforce today, and the hypothesis being tested is whether nepotism is an ethical practice. In order to further investigate and expand on this topic primary data collection and analysis must be conducted. As the research is both qualitative and quantitative in nature, this research project will adopt a mixed method approach in order to answer the defined research question. According to GOV.UK (2020), a mixed method will provide more in-depth findings, will provide a better understanding of the research topic and will also lessen the limitations which would come along with adopting either a qualitative or quantitative approach alone.

Both a survey and an interview were conducted as ways of gathering data for this research project. The aim of the interview and survey is to collect data regarding peoples' personal opinions of nepotism which will then be reviewed and analysed in order to determine its effects on the workforce and whether the majority believe it to be an ethical practice.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

Lewis-Beck *et al.* (2011) defines ontology as being a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of what exists and theories about what makes up reality. Researchers' ontological perspectives can either be fully objective or fully subjective, but in the case of a mixed methods study a researcher may obtain an intermediate ontological position by acknowledging that both objective and subjective views of the reality are useful in a social science study (Ansari, Panhwar and Mahesar, 2016).

Ontologically speaking nepotism can be perceived to be either ethical or not depending on an individual's experience. For example, if someone benefits from nepotism then in their 'reality' they will perceive nepotism as being a positive and ethical practice. Contrary, if someone experiences the negative effects of nepotism then in their 'reality' they will probably view it to be an unethical practice. Due to its ontological and mixed methods positioning, this research embraces the idea of multiple realities which is why both the positive and negative effects/experiences of nepotism were explored and reported on in the Literature Review section. This positioning and method will offer a more complete picture of the overlying research topic as it is taking multiple perspectives into account (George, 2022).

### **Nature of the Work**

As this research is more subjective in nature, it therefore falls into the interpretive paradigm of work. According to Scotland (2012) the ontological position of interpretivism is relativism, which defines reality as being subjective and can also differ from person to person. The interpretive paradigm denotes that a person's perceived reality is based on personal experiences rather than on outside knowledge. Whether real cases of nepotism are still occurring in Ireland today is difficult to fully conclude as they are extremely difficult to



prove. People also have conflicting views when it comes to nepotism's ethical stance. This indicates that the answer to the overlying research question can be interpreted in various ways and may not have a definitive yes or no response.

This study will use both surveys and interviews in order to collect data. Once the data has been collected it will then be analysed and interpreted in order to determine the final conclusion of this research project. The appropriate nature of the questions being asked in the surveys and interviews also had to be considered. As nepotism can be considered to be a sensitive topic that may cause people to feel uncomfortable, the phrasing and placement of each question asked had to be strategically thought about. According to Geisen (2021) asking sensitive questions can result in people refusing to take part in or completing an interview/survey. It can also cause respondents to provide inaccurate answers or to leave questions blank, these actions affect the quality of the data being collected which is also why a mixed method approach was adopted. This type of approach will allow more data to be collected compared to the amount of data that would be gathered from using either a qualitative or quantitative approach alone (Manjengwa, 2022). The more data collected the better in this situation as it is likely that some of the respondents may not have answered the questions truthfully or not answered them at all due to the sensitive nature of the topic. More details regarding the data collection methods used throughout this study can be found below.

### **Data Collection Methods – Interviews**

An interview will be conducted in hopes of achieving knowledgeable insights into the interviewee's personal views of nepotism. The data gathered from the interview will be examined, and critical responses will be highlighted in order to support and add further validity to this research project. According to Battaglia (2008) a purposive sample aims to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to represent the population. This particular type of sampling was used when selecting an individual to participate in the interview process. One HR professional was chosen to be the interviewee as the author believed that their background correlated with the themes of this study and that their knowledge and experiences would add value to the study and support the research output. The interviewee was presented with ten questions which can be found in Appendix A with the aim of obtaining a better understanding of the interpretive nature of this study. The purpose of this interview is to gather information on the interviewee's background and gain specific insights into the recruitment process and the implications of hiring family members and/or friends.

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic some interviewers and or/interviewees do not feel comfortable with having traditional, face to face interviews. This has meant that a lot of interviews had to be conducted online via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. Virtual interviews come with some advantages such as convenience and flexibility, but it is important to note that there are also many drawbacks. For example, it may be more difficult to take note of body language cues as usually only the persons' top half is visible on video calls. Garner (2012) denotes that internet connectivity problems can also arise when completing a virtual interview which would reduce the overall quality of the interview. Luckily the interviewee involved in this research project was comfortable with having a face to face interview so these drawbacks were not relevant in this instance.

The interview style was semi-structured and contained ten open-ended question which were created based on the research question and also on the information discussed throughout the

Literature Review section. As this research project focuses on nepotism, the questions were based around the interviewee's opinions on hiring of family and friends, anti-nepotism policies, and family-run businesses. A semi-structured interview approach was selected as it allows the interviewer to be in control and encourages open-ended responses. This interview style also encourages a two-way communication stream between the interviewer and interviewee, meaning more data can be gathered (Doyle, 2022). Questions that are open-ended in nature entices the interviewee to give longer, more in-depth answers which are useful when conducting an analysis. It was predetermined that the interview should last 20 – 30 minutes maximum.

A reasoning and description for why each question was included is provided below:

Question 1 is an introductory question, it was asked at the beginning of the interview in order to ease the respondent into the interview and make them feel more relaxed. The question was also asked in order to discover more about the interviewee's relevant background and experience in the field of HR.

The aim of asking Question 2 was to discover what characteristics the interviewee thought were most important when selecting someone to come in for an interview. It is often said that only the best suited candidates are selected to be interviewed, but with cases of nepotism this may not always be true. A person may be selected to come in for an interview solely because they either know or are related to someone within the industry. This question was asked to see if the interviewee would include knowing or being related to someone to be an important factor when selecting a person to come in for an interview.

Question 3 is positioned here as it relates to the preceding question. The aim of asking this question was to investigate how the interviewee decides on a single person to hire after all the interviews have taken place. Similar to the second question, this question was also asked to see if the interviewee would include knowing or being related to someone to be an important factor when selecting a person to fill a role.

Question 4 was posed in order to find out the interviewee's personal opinion on employee referral schemes. Under an employee referral scheme employees are rewarded for recommending a family member or friend for open job positions within the company. While these schemes can be beneficial for companies, they can also be perceived as encouraging acts of nepotism. Question 9 explores this area more, but the aim of this question was to just get the interviewee's opinion on this type of scheme.

Question 5 was asked in order to find out if the interviewee was on the 'who you know' or 'what you know' side when it comes to obtaining a job. As previously mentioned, 80% of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections (Fisher, 2020). This statistic illustrates that most jobs are given to people depending on who they know and not what they know. It will be interesting to hear and analyse the interviewee's response to this question.

The questions from here on are slightly more probing than the previous questions as it is getting closer to the end of the interview and the aim is to get as much information from the interviewee as possible. Question 6 was asked in hopes that the interviewee would list off some advantages and disadvantages which they believe come along with working with family members and/or friends.

Question 7 was asked to determine the interviewee's stance on whether nepotism is an ethical practice. This question was asked in hope that the interviewee would also give the reasons for why they believe it to be an ethical or unethical practice.

Question 8 was asked to find out the interviewee's thoughts on anti-nepotism policies. It was also asked in order to determine if the interviewee had any experience with creating and implementing any anti-nepotism policies throughout their career in HR.

Question 9 relates to question 4 but is positioned towards the end of the interview as it is a more sensitive question. This question is the first one to feature the word 'nepotism' in it – the word nepotism can be sensitive to some people and result in them being less open with their responses which is another reason this question is positioned later in the interview. The aim of this question is to find out whether the interviewee believes that employee referral schemes are linked to nepotism, and the reasons backing up their beliefs.

The final question aims is to find out whether the interviewee believes that family-run businesses fall under the same category as nepotism or if they are two separate practices. It is also hoped that they will back up their answer with the valid points or reasons for why they believe their given answer to be true.

### **Data Collection Methods – Surveys**

A survey will also be conducted in order to gain a larger quantity of data in regard to how people view nepotism. All of the useable data gathered from the survey will be analysed and used to add value and support to this research project.

Probability sampling methods including simple random sampling were used when conducting this survey meaning that anyone could partake in it. The only criteria was that respondents has to be eighteen years old or older to take part. The survey was self-administered, meaning that respondents have the option to complete the survey in their own time. The survey design had to be short and concise in order to prevent respondents from losing interest in the survey and leaving it incomplete. Three elements that must be considered when looking to design a successful survey are; determine the question to be asked, select the question type for each question and specify the wording, and design the question sequence and overall questionnaire layout (Burgess, 2001). In order to meet these three elements, the survey was compiled of fifteen questions based around research question and the topics mentioned throughout the Literature Review section. A copy of the survey abstract can be found in Appendix B of this research project, while a copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix C.

The survey takes approximately three minutes to complete, and the questions are organised in an attractive way in which they flow into one another. The survey consisted of both open and closed questions in order to gather as much data as possible from the participants. The survey was created using Microsoft Forms and it was made public on social media websites such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The survey was opened for exactly two weeks before being closed, and it received seventy-two responses in total.

A reasoning and description for why each question was included is provided below:

Questions 1 and 2 are both introductory questions, they were purposely asked at the beginning of the interview in order to ease the respondents into the survey and to make them feel more comfortable. These questions were also asked to determine the gender and age

bracket that the respondents fall under – although these factors are not particularly important in this study, they may be useful for future researchers.

Question 3 was asked in order to determine if nepotism was more prevalent in one employment sector compared to the other options given in the survey. This question can also be viewed as being another introductory question as it is extremely straight forward and easy for the respondents to answer, which is why it was positioned near the start of the survey.

Question 4 was asked to find out if the respondents believe that nepotism exists in Ireland. If the majority answer ‘yes’ to this question then it indicates that nepotism is in fact present in Irish culture today. While if the majority answer is ‘no’ then it implies that cases of nepotism do not occur often within Ireland.

Question 5 was asked with the aim of finding out whether the majority of participants believe that obtaining a job depends more on who you know or what you know. A common answer of ‘who you know’ to this question illustrates that nepotism is more linked to finding a job compared to a person’s experiences and qualifications.

Question 6 was asked in order to determine if the respondents’ believe nepotism to be an ethical practice or not. This particular question was asked in order to help with answering the overlying research question of this study.

Question 7 was purposefully positioned here as it is a follow up to the previous question asked. Participants were asked this question so that their answers could be compiled and compared in order to determine the main reasons of why people believe nepotism to be either ethical or unethical, again aiding with answering the overlying research question.

Question 8 was asked in order to determine if the respondents’ believe nepotism to have mostly positive or negative effects on the workforce. A third option was given as research conducted in the Literature Review section shows that nepotism can possibly have both positive and negative effects.

Question 9 is positioned here as it is a follow up to the previous question asked. Participants were asked this question so that their answers can be compiled and compared in order to determine the main effects nepotism has on the workforce.

Question 10 was asked in order to examine if the majority of companies have anti-nepotism policies in place or not. This question aims to get the participants thinking about anti-nepotism polices and also hopes to encourage them to look into what policies are in place to regulate nepotism in their workplace.

Question 11 is positioned here as it is a follow up to question 10. The main objective of asking this question was to see if the participants would be in favour of anti-nepotism laws being implemented in Ireland.

Question 12 aims to get the participants really thinking about whether nepotism practices are ethical. Some people may originally view nepotism as unethical, but if an opportunity arises whereby they get offered a job from a family member or friend they may decide to take it. Their opinion of nepotism may then change since it has now benefited them.

The purpose of asking Question 13 was to put the participants in a hiring manager's mind-set. Although some may believe that nepotism is an unethical practice when they are put in the position of deciding whether to hire someone they know versus hiring someone they do not know their judgement may become cloudy. People are naturally more inclined to trust those they know over strangers so it will be interesting to review the respondents' answers to this question.

Question 14 was asked in order to get the participants thinking about family-run businesses and to make them aware of how many family-run businesses are actually present in Ireland.

Question 15 was positioned here as it is linked to the previous question. Participants may not have considered that nepotism and family-run businesses could potentially fall under the same category, so this question was posed to get them thinking about it and to come to a decision of whether they are similar practices or not.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the data is collected it will be analysed using a thematic approach, where both the transcript from the interview and the participants' answers from the survey will thoroughly be examined. Crosley (2021) defines thematic analysis as being the study of patterns of meaning. As this study is subjective in nature, the responses gathered from both the survey and the interview will be analysed with the aim of identifying common trends or patterns within the answers.

Microsoft Forms was the chosen platform to distribute the survey as it includes a 'Responses' tab which provides a summary of the data collected from respondents. Information such as the number of respondents, the average time it took to complete the survey and charts showing a breakdown of the responses is available within this tab. The data can also be exported to excel allowing the information to be further analysed. The survey stayed open for two weeks before being closed – in that time it gained seventy-two responses overall. The responses from the survey were exported to Microsoft Excel in order to use the variety of data and formulae available on the software to enable a more in-depth analysis.

The interview was recorded and later transcribed in order to conduct a further investigation into the answers provided. Once transcribed the interviewee's answers were re-read a couple of times in order to search for meaning and to interpret any noteworthy statements that were made. The interviewee's responses were then coded and linked back to the themes relating to this study which allowed for a more detailed analysis in order to help answer the overlying research question. Any connections or contradictions found between what was discussed in the Literature Review section and the answers to the interview will also be highlighted.

### **Ethical Considerations**

It is important to have ethical considerations when completing a research project in order to show respect towards all the participants partaking in the study. All respondents must be willing consent to participate in the study i.e., they cannot be forced to take part.

A survey abstract was created and placed at the beginning of the survey in order to be fully transparent with the respondents and to make them aware of the purpose of the survey before they began answering any questions, a copy of the abstract is available in Appendix B of this research project. Significant terminologies such as nepotism are explained in the abstract to ensure that the participants fully understand the questions being asked. The abstract states

that the participants are allowed to exit the survey at any time and their answers will not be analysed further. Participants also have full anonymity in order to protect their identities and so that any answers given cannot be traced back to any one individual. The author's contact details were also included in the abstract in case any of the participants had a query regarding the survey.

Prior to the interview, the interviewee will be required to fill out a consent form. The form explains the background and the purpose of the study, it also gives details on how the interview will be conducted, what their answers will be used for and also how the data will be stored afterwards. The interviewee was also made aware that the interview would be recorded using the author's phone but was also assured that their identity would remain confidential. The consent form and the recording of the interview will be stored in a password protected file on the author's laptop. The file will be safely deleted from the author's laptop once the research project is complete. It was made known to the interviewee that they could refuse to answer any questions asked and could also stop the interview at any time.

### **Limitations**

One of the major limitations to this study was time. As this is an academic piece of work that must be graded it had to be completed by a certain date i.e., 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022. This reduced the amount of data that could be collected and analysed, having more time to gather data could have added further depth and value to this research project. A recommendation for future researchers on similar topics would be to ensure they have a longer research timeframe and more funds in order to collect a larger sample size.

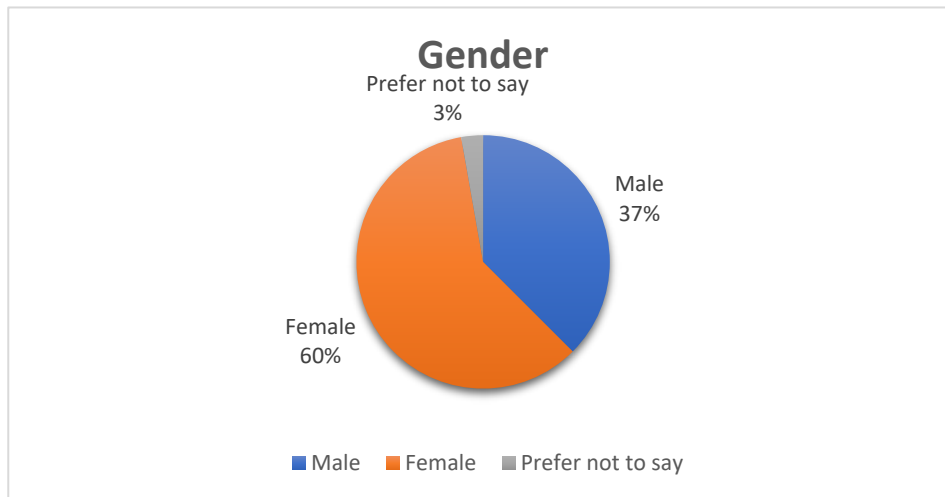
The small sample sizes were another limitation to this study. One interview was conducted and the survey only received seventy-two responses. This study aimed to discover whether nepotism was an ethical practice based largely on the public's opinions. Larger sample sizes can help to represent the views of the entire population so having a bigger sample would have helped to answer the overlying research question more accurately. As this research project encourages opinion based answers it may lessen the quality of answers gathered from the participants as some could be biased.

Nepotism can be a sensitive topic for some people, and because of this the wording and phrasing used when discussing nepotism must be carefully chosen which caused many limitations throughout this research project. For example some of the original questions that the author wanted to include in the interview and survey were not ethically appropriate. A question such as "*Have cases of nepotism occurred in your workplace?*" cannot be asked as the answer could potentially reveal either the respondent's or the organisation's identity. This could cause serious damage to the person's and/or organisation's reputation which is not what this research project aims to do. Therefore, the questions used in both the survey and the interview had to be reviewed and re-worded many times to ensure that they were not overstepping any ethical boundaries. This was an extremely time consuming task which cut into the already limited timeframe available to complete this project. If the topic was not considered to be so sensitive, more questions that were to the point could have been asked in order to obtain a better understanding of the overall research topic.

## Analysis & Findings

### Survey

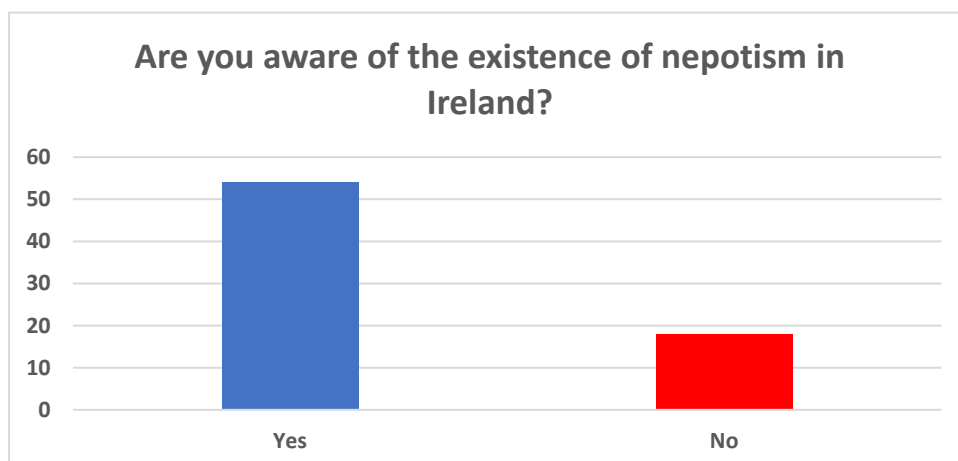
Once the survey was closed it was time to analyse all of the data which was collected. As the survey gathered seventy-two completed responses and all were useable it can be said that the completion rate of the survey was therefore 100%. Although it is not significantly important in this study the data regarding the respondents' backgrounds were analysed first. It was founded that 60% of the participants were female, 38% were male, and 3% did not want to disclose their gender (See Table 1).



(Table 1)

In regards to the participants' ages; the majority were from the Gen Z generation i.e., (10 – 25 years old) who made up 51% of the total participants. Millennials (26 – 41 years old) made up 29%, and Gen X (42 - 57 years old) made up 20%. The final background/introductory question asked participants what employment sector they worked in. It was founded that 43 respondents work in the private sector, 23 of them work in the public sector, 3 of them work for not profit organisations and the final 3 chose the 'other' option.

The rest of the questions asked in the survey are more related to the research topic and were asked in hopes of getting answers which would help to achieve the aims and objectives of this study. 75% of respondents said that they were aware of nepotism within Ireland (Table 2). This statistic indicates that nepotism still exists within Ireland today which helps answer the first part of the overlying research question.

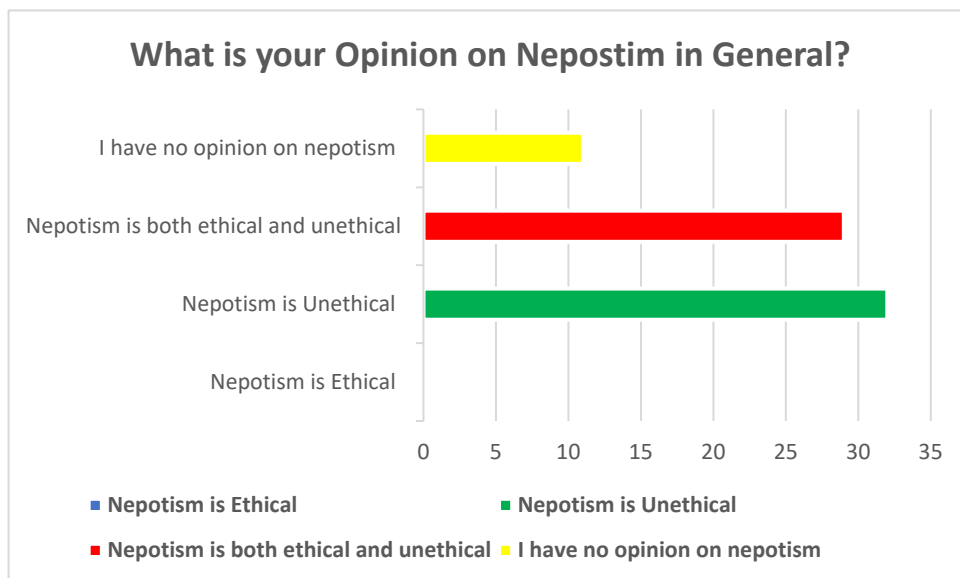


(Table 2)

As it has been established that there is a high possibility of nepotism still being practiced within Ireland it is important that there are policies in place so that favouritism does not occur. The survey found that 56% of participants did not even know if there was an anti-nepotism policy in place in their job, while 34% said that there was no anti-nepotism policy in place at all. These statistics are quite worrying as they imply that employees are not protected against acts of nepotism in work. Further analysis showed that 83% of participants would support a policy which limits the practice of nepotism, while only 17% said that they would not support it. This data helps to illustrate both the need and want of the creation and implementation of anti-nepotism laws within Ireland.

The majority (64%) of the respondents stated that they believe that obtaining a job depends more on who you know than what you know. This figure supports the current position of this study which believes that who you know is more valuable than what you know when it comes searching for a job. This data also backs up the point made by Fisher (2020) which states that 80% of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections.

The current position of this research views nepotism as being unethical. Of the 72 participants who took part in survey 0 of them stated that nepotism is an ethical practice (Table 3). The majority (32) believe nepotism to be an unethical practice which coincides with the author’s views. But it is important to note that 29 of the participants believe nepotism to be both ethical and unethical indicating that there are both positive and negative outcomes which come alongside practicing nepotism. This answer was expected due to the subjective and interpretive nature of the research – people have differing views when it comes to nepotism’s ethical stance, therefore it was expected that the overlying research question may not have a definitive yes or no answer.



(Table 3)

When the participants were asked why they believe nepotism to be unethical the majority of them mentioned the word ‘unfair’ in their answers, for example;

*“Nepotism creates an **unfair** playing field for job candidates.”*

*“Nepotism by definition means hiring an individual based on connections rather than experience and qualifications. I believe this to be clearly **unfair** and therefore unethical.”*



*“Unfair to give a job position away to someone you know rather than to give it based purely on work ethic and willingness to work.”*

It is clear from these answers that ‘fairness’ is a major theme in this research. In today’s modern society, everyone should be given equal opportunities when it comes to recruitment/promotion processes. Final decisions made should be based off the candidate’s previous knowledge and experience rather than just giving the job to a relative or friend.

The responses of those participants who believe nepotism to be both an ethical and unethical practice focused a lot on family-run businesses;

*“It can be ethical in certain situations, i.e. a **family business**. It has no place in a larger company.”*

*“For small **family businesses**, giving the job to a close family member may feel like the default option and may work better than trying to hire other people. In larger companies, I find it unethical.”*

These answers imply that nepotism is ok to practice in family-run businesses but not in larger corporate companies. Contrary to this, when respondents were asked if they believe that family-run businesses have an obligation to consider nepotism in their policies, 65% said yes which illustrates that they have conflicted views when it comes to nepotism and family-run businesses. Only 9 of the participants knew that family-run businesses make up approximately 64% of all businesses within Ireland (DCU Business School, 2020). Therefore it is likely that their views of nepotism and family-run businesses changed when they learnt how many of them existed within Ireland.

It was found that the 40 of participants would chose to hire someone they do not know over someone they know such as a family member or friend. This result was surprising as people tend to trust those they know more than strangers. It was predicted that the majority would chose the other option given, but it could also be a possibility that they chose the ‘someone you do not know’ option because they feel ethically obliged to do so. Even though the majority said that they would be more likely to hire a stranger over a family member or friend, 74% of the participants believe that it is ok to accept a job from family and friends sometimes, depending on the circumstances, while 25% said that is it completely ok to do. These answers can come across as being hypocritical when compared to other answers from previous questions. This is due to the subjective nature of the work and how the questions can be interpreted in various ways.

Questions focusing on the effects of nepotism were also analysed. 1% of the participants believed nepotism to have positive effects on the workforce, 42% of them believed it to have negative effects, and 56% of respondents believed it to have both positive and negative effects on the workforce.

The responses of those participants who believe nepotism to have both positive and negative effects on the workforce provided a list of pros and cons;

*“Pro- family history, hiring people you know creates a positive environment as they feel comfortable working with the people they know.*

*Con- unfairness to employees during hiring stage, low morale if they feel others are favored because they know people in the business.”*

*“Positive: for small family businesses, people might be trained casually for years until they join the company.*

*Negative: for larger companies, it prevents people from different backgrounds to access certain jobs. It also makes a company less diverse.”*

These answers illustrate that there are good and bad effects associated with nepotism. It is important that if nepotism is practiced it is done so in a professional and ethical manner in which favouritism does not occur as it can demotivate others in the business who are not involved in nepotism (Gleeson, 2016).

### **Interview**

For this section of the study, a People Services Manager with over fifteen-year experience within the field of Human Resources was interviewed. This particular interviewee was chosen due to their level of experience and knowledge within the HR/recruitment industry. Due to the easing of some of the COVID-19 restrictions the interview was able to be conducted in person and took place within the interviewee’s place of work. The participant and their employer will remain unnamed throughout this discussion in order to protect their identity.

The first question was an introductory question aiming to ease the participant into the interview and find out more about their work history and background. When answering this question the interviewee highlighted the roles they were involved in over the years such as a payroll specialist, HR specialist, reward specialist, HR business partner, HR officer and People Services Manager. The interviewee’s extended job history will hopefully allow them to contribute their own insights and experiences to this study, therefore adding value to this research project.

Questions 2 and 3 focused on the theme of important candidate characteristics. These questions were asked with the objective of finding out what characteristics the interviewee felt were most important when selecting someone to come in for an interview and also how they then select someone to fill a vacant job position. The interviewee said that skills and relevant experience are the first thing that they look for when selecting people to be interviewed– this was the expected answer. The interviewee also mentioned that the person selected to fill a role must be personable and outgoing. The interviewee did not include knowing or being related to someone to be an important factor when selecting a person to fill a role. This begs the question of why so many jobs are filled through personal and professional connections when skills and relevant experience is supposed to be the main criteria used when selecting someone for a job.

Employee referral schemes is the theme of questions 4 and 9. These questions were asked to gather the interviewee’s opinion on employee referral schemes and to find out if they believe employee referral schemes to be linked to nepotism. The interviewee describes these types of schemes as being “*excellent*”. According to Woods (2018) the average recruitment process cost for a vacant role is €13,100. The interviewee explains how these schemes can help to reduce recruitment costs once done correctly. There is often money incentives associated with these schemes as the organisational costs for looking for candidates themselves is much higher. The interviewee does not think that these schemes are linked to nepotism as long as the candidates are still put through the official recruitment process.

Question 5 was asked in order to find out if the interviewee was on the ‘who you know’ or ‘what you know’ side when it comes to obtaining a job. The interviewee believes that in today’s modern society getting a job depends more on what you know and describes getting a job depending on who you know as being “*a bit old school*”. This contradicts Fisher’s (2020) statement which denotes that 80% of jobs are filled through personal and professional connections. The interviewee does state that throughout their career they have hired people solely based on the reason that they were related to someone within the organisation but would not do it now unless put under pressure to do so by a senior staff member.

*“Obviously I would interview the referred person, but I wouldn’t put myself under pressure to hire them just because of who they are – ultimately I still have a team to manage to best deliver on our objectives and I can only do that with the best people that I feel are good for the job.”*

The author found this statement from the interviewee to be quite profound and believe that all hiring managers should have this attitude.

The questions from here on are slightly more probing than the previous questions as it is getting closer to the end of the interview and the aim is to get as much information from the interviewee as possible.

Question 6 was asked in hopes that the interviewee would list off some advantages and disadvantages that they believe come along with working with family members and/or friends. Unfortunately, the interviewee could not contribute a lot of their own personal experiences to this question as they have never worked alongside a family member before, but they did highlight the importance of working with friends;

*“I think it is important to work with friends in order to enjoy work and have someone there that you can go get coffee or lunch with and share ideas and problems with. They will also understand the company culture and can advise you. I think it is extremely beneficial to work with friends.”*

When asked Question 7 the interviewee once again portrayed working with friends in a positive light;

*“I think friends are completely different to family members to be honest. I have recommended friends for jobs within organisations that I was working in at the time and a few of them got jobs there too – I definitely have no issue with recommending friends for jobs.”*

It is clear from both of these answers that interviewee believes hiring friends to be an ethical practice. In regards to hiring family members, the interviewee also believes it to be ethical as long as they are put through the full recruitment process first.

Question 8 was asked to find out the interviewee’s thoughts on anti-nepotism policies. It was founded that the interviewee was totally against anti-nepotism polices as they believe that implementing these types of policies would prevent excellent candidates from being hired. Contrary, the majority of the survey participants would support a policy which limits the practice of nepotism. These differences of opinions are due to the subjective and interpretive nature of the research.

The final question was asked to find out whether the interviewee believes that family-run businesses fall under the same category as nepotism;

*“No I don’t think that they fall under nepotism at all, if you look at a bar for example some owners have their sons and daughters in behind the bar from a young age and eventually they grow up to take over the bar. Also farms, some children would work on their parent’s farm and then take it over – I wouldn’t see things like that being nepotism, I think it is just a way of life. And it is not just an Irish thing, it is present in every country in the world.”*

The interviewee’s answer indicates that family-run businesses and nepotism do not fall under the same category but others may have conflicting views about this as both terms are extremely similar.

Overall, conducting an interview and survey was extremely useful and insightful. They provided the author with a greater knowledge and understanding of the topic of nepotism and also helped to add value to the study and support the research output. Based on the answers from both the survey and the interview and also from the evidence present in the Literature Review section it is clear that some form nepotism is still prevalent within Ireland today. This answers the first part of the overlying research question, the second half is a bit more difficult to define. The data analysis from the survey portrayed a degree of uncertainty from the survey participants regarding their perception on the ethical stance of nepotism. None of the survey participants stated that nepotism is an overall ethical practice. If the results were solely based on this statistic alone then the hypothesis would be rejected immediately. But as almost half of the participants believe nepotism to be both ethical and unethical it makes the line between rejecting and failing to reject the hypothesis unclear. Therefore, the hypothesis that nepotism is an ethical practice remains inconclusive as there is not enough evidence to either prove or disprove it. This conclusion was predicted due to the subjective and interpretive nature of the research, it was expected that the overlying research question may not have a definitive yes or no answer.

## **Discussion & Conclusion**

To reiterate Kaushal's (2021) point, nepotism is one of the least researched and most poorly defined human resource approaches. It is also considered to be an extremely sensitive issue that most businesses do not like or want to discuss. Both of these points highlight the need for a more in-depth investigation to be done on this particular topic, which is why it was chosen for this research project.

It was interpreted in the analysis and findings section that nepotism still exists within Ireland today due to the majority of survey participants stating that they were aware of nepotism in Ireland and also because the interviewee confirmed that they have hired people solely based on the reason that they were related to someone within the organisation in the past. Although we now know that nepotism still exists in some form within Ireland, the hypothesis that nepotism is an ethical practice remains unproven as there is not enough concrete evidence to either prove or disprove it.

Survey participants were hesitant to decide on whether nepotism is fully ethical or unethical mainly because of the strong focus on family-run businesses. Some participants believe nepotism to be acceptable in family-run businesses, while also stating it is an unethical practice if it happens within larger corporate companies. The interviewee's beliefs correlate to those of the survey participants on this topic as the interviewee also views family-run businesses and nepotism to be separate to one another. Both family-run and non-family-run businesses still have a responsibility to ensure that favouritism does not occur within the workplace as it is this which causes employees to feel discriminated against. Those in senior management positions need to ensure that promotions and job positions are only given to those who are truly deserving regardless of any pre-existing relationships with employees/candidates. One recommendation that has come from completing this research project is that all businesses should implement and enforce clear policies regarding the hiring and promoting of family members and friends. This coincides with the ideas of Procter (2022) who believes anti-nepotism policies should be put in place which prohibits friends and family members from working in the same department or reporting to each other. All businesses should also encourage employees to speak up if they feel in anyway discriminated against and ensure a thorough investigation is undertaken if any allegations of nepotism or discrimination occur.

The hypothesis that nepotism is an ethical practice remains unproven also due to the reason that nepotism is known to have both positive and negative effects on an organisation and its workforce. This was proven in the analysis and findings section as it was found that over half of the survey participants believe nepotism to have both positive and negative effects on the workforce. This belief correlates with the supporting evidence in the Literature Review section where both positive and negative effects of nepotism were discussed. It was found that the main positive effects associated with nepotism are; the ability to spend more quality time with family members, the creation of a trustful working environment, and reduced hiring costs. While the main negative effects associated with nepotism are; a less innovative and diverse workforce, an increased feeling of exclusion amongst employees and increased training costs if an underqualified family member or friend is hired. Due to their being both positive and negative effects being linked with nepotism organisations need to be very careful with how they practice and manage nepotism as it can be either extremely detrimental or beneficial to both the business and its workforce.

One unexpected outcome that came from completing this research topic was that the majority of survey participants said that they would chose to hire someone they do not know over someone they already knew. It was expected that the majority would chose the other option as people are usually more inclined to trust those they already know over strangers. It may be a possibility that the survey participants felt too awkward to select the ‘someone you know’ option due to the survey topic being about nepotism which is known to be a sensitive issue for many people. It would be interesting to see what option the participants would chose if faced with this decision in real life.

From looking at other studies based around nepotism it was founded that other researchers have likewise not been able to determine if practicing nepotism is fully ethical or not. This is most likely due to the ontological and interpretive position of the research which means nepotism can be perceived to be either ethical or not depending on an individual’s experience. Although this research project was not able to confirm if nepotism is completely ethical or not it does however still contribute to the broader topic of discussion of nepotism in regard to highlighting the need for anti-nepotism policies to be implemented in all forms of businesses including those that are family-run. It is important to have anti-nepotism policies in place to ensure that if nepotism is practiced it is done so in a professional manner in which favouritism does not occur.

As discussed in the methodology section of this study there were a few limitations that came along with completing this research project. The main limitations included time, small sample sizes, and the sensitivity level of the research topic. A recommendation for future researchers would be to ensure they have a longer research timeframe in order to increase the amount of data that could be collected and analysed to add further depth and value to the research. Obtaining a larger sample size is another recommendation for future researchers, a larger sample size would have helped to answer the overlying research question more accurately. If this research project could be re-done with no limitations the author would complete more individual interviews in order to try represent the views of the entire population. Also if nepotism was not such a sensitive topic the author would have asked more straight forward questions in the interview and survey in order to obtain a better understanding of the overall research topic.

In conclusion, nepotism is still prevalent within Ireland today and it does not look like it will be going away any time soon. For this reason it is important that policies are put in place to protect employees from the misuse of nepotism. If organisations do decide to hire family members and friends they need to do so in a fair and ethical manner without showing favouritism to any one individual. This can be done by ensuring everyone is put through the same recruitment process and then selecting the candidate who is best suited for the role without the pre-existing relationship factor coming into play.

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## **Appendix A – Interview Questions List**

- Q1) Can you tell me a bit about your background and how you got into the field of HR?
- Q2) Which factors do you think are most important when selecting someone to come in for an interview?
- Q3) How do you then decide on a single person to fill the role after the interview process has taken place?
- Q4) Could you give me your opinion on employee referral schemes?
- Q5) Do you think that obtaining a job depends more on who you know or what you know? Please elaborate.
- Q6) Do you think working alongside family members and/or friends is beneficial or not? Please elaborate.
- Q7) Do you feel there are any ethical issues around the hiring of family and friends?
- Q8) What is your opinion on organisational policies being in place around hiring family and friends?
- Q9) Do you think that employee referral schemes could possibly be encouraging nepotism in the workplace?
- Q10) What are your thoughts on family-run businesses, and do you think they fall under the nepotism category?

## **Appendix B – Survey Abstract**

This research survey looks to discover if nepotism still exists in Ireland today. This dissertation serves to investigate the area of nepotism within the current Irish workforce and whether the overall idea of nepotism is ethical. This study will also look to define both the positive and negative effects nepotism has on people.

Please Note: This study defines nepotism in its simplest form, nepotism is when a person in power provides advantageous opportunities such as a job position to close friends and family members.

This survey is completely anonymous, so any answers given will not be traced back to any one individual. At any time during the survey you may opt-out of the survey process, any incomplete surveys will not be used in the findings of the study. All information gathered in the survey will be securely stored by the researcher.

The survey consists of 15 questions and takes approximately 3 minutes to complete.

Surveyor is contactable at: [x18353293@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x18353293@student.ncirl.ie)

## Appendix C – Survey Questions

**1. Please specify your gender:**

Male.

Female.

Prefer not to say.

**2. Please select what age bracket you fall under:**

18-21

21-25

25-30

30-40

40+

**3. What employment sector do you work in?**

Public.

Private.

Non-Profit.

Other.

**4. Are you aware of the existence of nepotism in Ireland?**

Yes.

No.

**5. Do you believe that obtaining a job depends more on who you know or what you know?**

Who you know.

What you know.

**6. What is your opinion on nepotism in general?**

Nepotism in an ethical practice.

Nepotism in an unethical practice.

Nepotism is both an ethical and unethical practice.

I have no opinion on nepotism.

**7. Please give more detail on why you believe nepotism to be ethical or not.**

**8. In your opinion, what type of effects' does nepotism have on the workforce?**

Positive effects.

Negative effects.

Both positive and negative effects.

**9. Please give examples of some of the effects you believe nepotism has on the workforce.**

**10. Does the company you work for have an anti-nepotism policy in place?**

Yes.

No.

Not sure.

**11. Would you be in support of a policy that limits the practice of nepotism?**

Yes.

No.

**12. In your opinion do you think accepting jobs from family and friends is ok to do?**

Yes.

Sometimes, depending on the circumstances.

No.

**13. If you were in a hiring position, who would you be more likely to hire?**

Someone you know i.e., a family member or friend.

Someone you don't know.

**14. Did you know that family-run businesses make up approximately 64% of all businesses within Ireland?**

Yes.

No.

**15. Do you think that family-run businesses have an obligation to consider nepotism in their policies?**

Yes.

No.