

What are the thoughts and perspectives of female employees within multinational corporations in Ireland on how talent management and retention strategies influence gender equality?

National College of Ireland

Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland in August 2022

Abstract

Purpose: Organisations globally are facing pressing talent shortages. Women are seen as a valuable, untapped and underrepresented pool of talent. Therefore, organisations are increasing their efforts to attract women. Talent management is gaining strategic importance for Multinationals and local businesses to attract and retain talent. The aim of this research is to explore the feelings and perspectives of women towards the relationship between Talent Management, Retention Strategies and Gender Equality in the Irish context. The literature review investigated how gender inequalities emerge. Flexibility, Work Life Balance, Training and Development, Career Progression/Succession Planning, Health and Wellbeing were identified as main recurring factors impacting on women's retention and turnover intention.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative research approach was used to address this dearth in literature. Interview questions were devised by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with women working in foreign owned Multinationals in Ireland. Data gathered were thematically analysed and a number of emerging main themes and sub-themes were identified.

Findings: The results found that all the organisations adopt gender-blind policies. We found that women were under-represented at every level in the organisations. Concurring with literature, results show that gender inequalities and intention to leave or stay were attributed to a cluster of factors as opposed to one.

Contribution/value: The association of talent management and gender is understudied. Our study contributes to a better understanding of how talent management practices and retention strategies influence gender inequality. A number of recommendations were provided for organisations and practitioners. While this study has some limitations it lays the foundation for further research into how talent management and retention strategies impact on gender equality.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland Research Students Declaration Form (Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Title of Thesis: What are the thoughts and perspectives of female employees within multinational corporations in Ireland on how talent management and retention strategies influence gender equality?

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Acknowledgements

This study and journey would not have been accomplished without the support, love, and influence of extraordinary people.

To Professor Hill, Dr Darcy, Dr Pathak, and Dr Casey for awarding me the Dean's Scholarship. Karen Ryan, thank you I am forever grateful.

To SVP Edenderry and Limerick, special thanks to Sheila, Rosemary, and Martin. Forever indebted.

To my inspiring dissertation supervisor, Dr. David Mothersill for being so generous with his time, advice, and academic expertise.

Thanks to all the lecturers and NCI staff, special thanks to Robert MacDonald for helping in a time of crisis.

My gratitude to the lovely ladies who took part in my study.

Thanks to my fellow classmates for their help and support.

To my lovely friends Majo, Michelle S, Grainne, Deirdre, Elaine, Michelle O, Mary M, Bernie, Kerry, thank you.

To my sis Joyce and Sarah for always being there and my "tribu."

To my precious children, thank you for being my inspiration and always pushing me to be a better version of myself.

In memory of Ma and Grandpère.

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List of Abbreviations

Talent management	TM
Retention strategies	RS
Chartered Institute of Personnel Development	CIPD
Multinationals	MNC
Work life Balance	WLB
Human Resource Management	HRM
Global Talent Management	GTM
Inclusive Approach	IA
Exclusive Approach	EA
Health and wellbeing	HWB
Flexible working	FW
Training and Development	T&D

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. 1 Context

Global talent shortages are proving challenging for organisations. Talent management (TM) is gaining strategic importance globally for both multinationals (MNC) and local organisations competing to entice and retain talent (Tatli *et al.* 2012). Organisations are using TM to capture, influence and protect talents as they are deemed to be unique strategic resources. Increasing global uncertainty and complexity are driving the growth in importance of talent related issues.

Characterised as a phenomenon by Dries (2013), TM still needs to gain academic credibility due to scepticism surrounding its lack of conceptual framework and varied quality of empirical work (Collings *et al.* 2019). TM has been criticised by some for being a repackaging of existing HRM practices, a new management fashion, “old wine in new bottles” (Iles *et al.* 2010, p. 181) and difficulty to distinguish TM from conventional HRM (Collings and Mellahi 2009).

It is argued that in contrast to HRM, TM is a collective method of recruitment, retention and talent development in an organisation for its future benefit (Iles *et al.* 2010). TM starts with an organisation’s strategic drive of improving and supporting a talented team of people through Talent Development, Resourcing Practices, Retention plans, Career Planning, attraction, Succession Planning and Career Management (Armstrong and Taylor 2012).

Practitioners’ and consultants led TM is critical to the achievement of business goals (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* 2020) and a valuable tool to adapt to market volatility. Latest debates about talent highlights its growing implication in the business world (Paul, TN and Scullion 2021; Taylor 2019; Armstrong and Taylor 2012). Talent is seen as subjective and its definition is a controversial issue in the HRM field. In their exploratory case study Paul *et al.* (2021) view talent as a rare strategic resource that organisations are increasingly acknowledging effective management of to achieve their strategic goals and the use of TM to acquire, leverage, and uphold these resources. The need of effective TM is increasingly being recognised by organisations in order to meet their objectives and face leadership and talent challenges (Paul *et al.* 2021).

An important growth constraint highlighted by organisations is the scarcity of skills and competences available (PWC 2017). Recruitment and retention have become important tools to win the talent war. In their literature review Tatli *et al.*, (2012) found that a source of concern for organisations as well as governments is the issue of under-utilisation of female talent. Recently organisations have been increasing their inclusion and diversity efforts in a bid to attract women as they are a valuable, untapped and underrepresented pool of talent (PWC 2017; Tatli *et al.*, 2012).

CSO (2020), figures of 2019 showed that 59.9% of women in Ireland had a third level degree and men 52.2%. However, when it comes to representation in the workforce, women rate was 63% and men 74.6%. Women and girls are disadvantaged in their capacity to exert their “educational and professional choices to their full potential” due to gender inequalities (Amaral and Jaller 2020, p.199). Gender inequality is defined as women’s disadvantage also sometimes characterised by metaphors for instance ‘glass ceiling’ and ‘underrepresented’ (Bruckmüller and Braun 2020).

Ireland has made some progress in the “Women in Work Index ranking” (PWC 2021). However, the pandemic has caused a “shecession” with more women than men losing their job (PWC 2021). Furthermore, burnout and added pressure have led women considering downgrading or leaving their job (McKinsey & Company 2021). This will have serious implications on women’s careers, business growth and aggravate skill shortages (Kennedy 2021). As pointed out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019), while improvement towards gender equality recovery can be expected to start in 2022, progress rate will have to double to offset losses by 2030.

Under-representation of women in MNCs globally is reported by UNCTAD (2021). While women’s representation has increased at board level, due to stakeholders pressure this has not translated at managerial level (UNCTAD 2021). As stated by Alexis Krivkovich in McKinsey & Company (2022) the most discriminatory promotion amongst males and females is not at the top or C-suite, “it is at the first step to manager”. For every 100 men promoted, only 86 females get promoted meaning that “women’s career progression is slowed down right out of the gate, and they never have that opportunity to catch up” (McKinsey & Company 2022).

In large organisations in Ireland, CSO (2022) shows that in 2019 only 26% of senior roles, “11.5% of Chief Executive Officer positions and 28.3% of Senior Executive roles”, 19.6% Board of Directors positions and only 7.4% of Chairperson positions were occupied by women. Tatli *et al.* (2012) contend that the main barrier to promoting meritocracy at work is gender inequality.

1.2 Objectives

As stated by Sheehan and Anderson (2015), TM offers a setting for asking and answering various intriguing and thorough research questions. The key purpose of the study was to explore the feelings and perspectives of female employees towards the relationship between TM practices and RS and gender equality in the Irish context and by doing so respond to skill shortages. We view talent shortages and gender inequality as equally important for this study as they are intrinsically linked. The study will mainly focus on TM and RS initiatives that MNCs have in place to retain women and address the issue of under representation and gender inequalities.

The research asked about Flexibility, Work Life Balance (WLB), Training and Development (T&D), Career and Succession Planning, Health, and Wellbeing (HWB) initiatives that were found to be recurrent themes in the literature reviewed as having an impact on the retention of women as well as on their intention to leave. We will seek to understand the underlying factors impacting on these initiatives. While some advances have been made in the TM field, there is insufficient understanding about its conception, implementation and development in an organisational context (Paul *et al.* 2021).

We aim at understanding from women’s perspectives their feelings about how current TM practices and retention strategies (RS) are impacting on gender issues in an Irish context. It will help us gain an insight into how to retain current and newly recruited women in the Irish workforce. This research can be valuable for Human Resource Management (HRM) practitioners and organisations.

1.3 Rationale

Organisations are increasingly advertising their diversity and inclusion strategies in order to attract more women to alleviate talent shortages issues. While attention is focused on attracting, the ongoing debate is about resignation, “shecession,” and downgrading. Therefore, once women are recruited what are the strategies in place to retain, motivate and help them progress in the workplace? What is being done to address the issue of gender inequality and underrepresentation of women at managerial and different levels of the organisations. What are organisations doing to retain existing female employees and addressing gender inequalities at different levels? . Figure 1 shows a limited and not meant to be comprehensive model proposed for understanding the impact of TM and RS on talent shortages and gender equality.

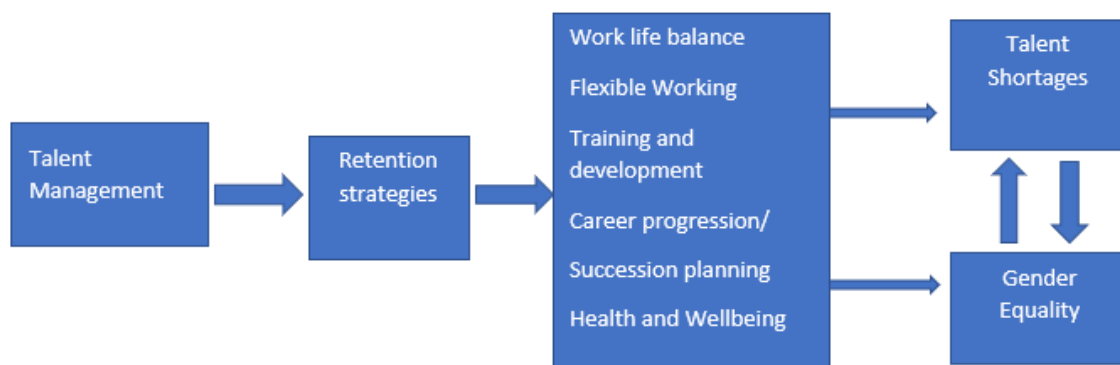


Figure 1: Model of the impact of TM and RS on talent shortages and gender equality, source researcher

This study will focus on women working in Irish foreign owned multinationals (MNC). Makarem, Metcalfe and Afiouni (2019) call on researchers to diverge from a positivist style of TM’s writing to one that recognises the ubiquitous influence of gender in the TM debate and consider women and other gender minority’s experiences in the workplace. We want to give a voice to every woman willing to participate and get their views and individual experiences on the researched topic.

By directly focusing on women in the Irish workforce, we want to address gaps in the TM literature about the exclusion of gender issues from TM debate (Makarem *et al.* 2019) and the underdeveloped correlation between TM and gender as highlighted by Paul *et al.* (2021).

Several TM and RS studies were focused on women in Executive, Board, and Managerial roles, IT, and hospitality. This proposed study will make no differentiation on roles or levels in the organisation. We will focus on MNCs because; Ireland is the country that is mostly dependent on MNC worldwide (McDonnell, Lavelle and Gunnigle., n.d.), MNC's have embraced TM strategies (Al Ariss, Casio and Paawe 2014) and MNC tend to employ women (Frenkel 2017). Therefore, we contend that MNC's will be an appropriate choice to conduct our study.

1.4 Dissertation Overview

The dissertation consists of 6 chapters

- Chapter 1: is the introduction that gives an overview of the study being undertaken, its relevance, how it is conducted and its main conclusions.
- Chapter 2: reviews existing literature on the researched topic. Talent management and retention strategy will be explored from an academic perspective as well as how they are being used in practice.
- Chapter 3: discuss the methodology used in the research. It also outlines how the study's aims were addressed and analysed.
- Chapter 4: illustrates the findings and analysis. Thematic areas that arose from the data will be presented and examined with reference to existing literature and research.
- Chapter 5: presents a discussion of the findings illustrated in chapter 4 in broader literature framework
- Chapter 6: presents the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

1.5 Conclusion

TM's lack of agreed definition and theoretical framework have recently been stressed in literature as well as the complexity and growing importance of TM practices. However, definition ambiguity, importance of context, growing significance of gender is quite challenging for TM implementation in organisations. Gaps have been identified regarding the influences of TM and gender. Previous research raised the issue and calls were made for further investigation. Hence influencing our research to focus on TM, RS and their influence on gender equality on women working in foreign owned MNCs in Ireland.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relating to TM, RS , gender inequality and talent shortages. The chapter will also look at gap in the literature and also how gender inequality emerges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section will examine and review key literature regarding talent management and retention strategies in a view to understanding their influence on gender equality and talent shortages. We will also investigate how gender inequalities emerge. Over recent decades, TM as a topic has gained prevalence in the management and HRM areas according to literature. However, after reviewing the literature we would agree with Collings *et al.* (2019) assertion that many questions remain even if there has been significant development and academic work in the area.

2.2 Gender inequality in the workplace in Ireland in 2022

The pandemic has caused a “shecession” by reversing gains women have made in the workplace by some decades (PwC 2022). As noted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2021), in 17 out of 24 wealthy countries where unemployment soared in 2021, women in female-dominated sectors were more likely to have lost their job compared to men.

On the gender equality front, ranking 7th in the European Union (EU), Ireland has made some progress according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (2022). Gender equality is defined as the equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities of both gender (Department of Justice 2022) and achieving it is complex (Amaral and Jaller 2020).

According to Publicjobs.ie (2022), gender inequality subsists in all areas of the Irish labour market. Women encounter structural barriers such as insufficient childcare and male controlled hierarchies. Citing Ibec’s 2021’s survey they stated that in the past two years, women have been under increased pressure and stress regarding childcare and eldercare leading to women requesting FW more often than men. Subsequently leading to further disadvantage for women’s progression as they work less hours than their male colleagues.

The World Health Organisation (2018) recommended some preventive measures namely training, support group, flexibility, participation in decision making, autonomy amongst others to reduce burnout and stress. However, Deloitte (2022) latest “Women@Work2022: A Global Outlook” report reveals that burnout and stress was widespread and lack of FW

was hindering women's support at work. A total of 40% burnout was the main factor leading to women's resignation or intention to leave. Only 10% of employees intend to stay with their current employer for more than 5 years, while 50% surveyed intend to go in following two years.

As stated by the WEF (2021), working 7.7 extra hours more than men weekly on unpaid childcare was potentially forcing some women out of paid work. Therefore, if there are no policies to address the unequal burden faced by women, they "will return to fewer hours, lower-skilled, and lower paid jobs" (World Economic Forum 2021). Amaral and Jaller (2020) explained that gender policies are commonly categorised as *sensitive* - cater for men and women's different roles and needs; *neutral* – target both genders equally, and; *blind* – disregards diverse roles or needs and unable to acknowledge different effects on males and females. In their conclusion they stated that:

"the existence of gender blind laws, social practices, traditions and stereotypes that reproduce unequal relationships between women and men reinforces the need to discuss the role of gender in society and to integrate it into all political and economic debates" (Amaral and Jaller 2020, p. 199).

Tatli *et al.* (2012) point out that the ineffective use of female talent arises from the "failure to invest in equality and flexibility policies" (p.9).

2.3 Global talent shortages in 2022

Talent shortages globally reached a 16-year high with 75% employers reporting challenges in filling positions according to the Manpower Group (2022b) survey. The reasons given for the acute talent shortages were the pandemic and conflict in Ukraine as having an effect on supply chain and economic uncertainty (World Economic Forum 2022) as well as changing demographics and increase in early retirement (Manpower Group 2022). However, big companies were facing the biggest challenge with 77% reporting difficulties in finding candidates.

MNCs have to contend for talent on a national as well as a global level (Scullion *et al.* 2010). Attracting, developing various groups in diverse labour market segments with a wide array of career expectations is a challenge faced by MNCs. Investigation by academics about the

challenges of efficient TM processes, development and implementation found shortage of talent supply globally to be the major hindrance (CIPD 2021; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* 2019; Collings *et al.* 2019; Meyers and van Woerkom 2014). Reskilling employees was proposed in the World Economic Forum (WEF) report of 2020 to “tackle the skills gap” (World Economic Forum 2022). However, the study found that only an average of 70% of employers were “expected to offer reskilling or upskilling” to their employees.

Bohmer and Schinnenburg (2016) built a model to enhance the understanding of how global TM (GTM) in MNCs can be devised to fit long-term career courses and proposed enhancing the number of women in the workforce as a solution to talent shortages. However, this solution poses two challenges for MNC’s. First, study in a German context indicates “low gender specific inclusion TM elements with females who are often disadvantaged” (Festing *et al.*, cited in Bohmer and Schinnenburg 2016, p.74). Second, “gender specific differences in values and decision making throughout life” (p.74). While valid and invaluable contribution was made by Bohmer and Schinnenburg, (2016), it can be argued that the model is limited to the elite and identification of key roles to be filled.

Tatli *et al.* (2012) contend that gender discrimination in organisational cultures and practices presents barriers for women’s full participation in work and management processes. Latest Deloitte (2022) report shows that women working for inclusive and supportive organisations, 54% planned to quit within 5 years and 23% planned to stay longer and none were planning to leave. They recommended that for women to thrive, organisations need to prioritise HWB, address burnout and implement flexible policies.

2.4 Women in Irish workforce and Gender inequality

Traditionally patriarchal, heavily influenced by religion, work ban on married women, Ireland has known a great change (Sheehan *et al.* 2017). Women’s roles changed from stay at home to bread winner (O’Sullivan 2012). The increase of women in the Irish workforce are credited to the elimination of the work ban, change in women’s attitude and expectations, the 1990s economic boom and change in legislations (Cross and Linehan 2006). However, despite being more educated and enhancement at promoting gender

diversity at national, EU and organisational level, women are once more underrepresented in the Irish workplace.

Bruckmüller and Braun (2020) view gender inequality as a complex phenomenon that is almost undoubtedly triggered by a variety of factors. Correspondingly, Publicjobs.ie (2022) asserts that the various factors of inequality at work are access to employment, pay gap, disparity in promotions, racism regarding women of colour, and sexual harassment. They cautioned that it frequently shows up in subtle ways such as less progression opportunities for mothers and higher occurrence of burnout in women.

Female face additional restrictive aspects due to role stereotypes, gender role expectations hence leading to barriers for female managers (Bohmer and Schinnenburg 2016). Cross and Linehan (2006) point out that organisational rules and processes that “act as transparent barriers for female managers” are devised by senior management (p.32). Talented women are precluded from achieving equal outcomes as their male counterparts due to “gender inequalities in recruitment, retention and career development” (Tatli *et al.* 2012, p.1) with other instances being mentoring, WLB and promotion (Cross and Linehan 2006).

In their narrative review, Makarem *et al.* (2019) state “that the social construction of TM has been mostly blind, underpinned by a masculine rhetoric” (p.182). They further add that gender inequality permeates through the organisational structures and influences TM practices.

The question that can be posed is what is impacting TM practices regarding the retention of women and contributing to gender inequality in the Irish workforce?

2.5 TM and Global Talent Management (GTM)

TM gained prominence after publication of the McKinsey’s (1998) study “The War for Talent”. TM’s lack of agreed definition stems mainly from being practitioner led instead of research led (Paul *et al.* 2021). Internationalisation of companies has led to the emergence a global element of TM. GTM is used in MNCs to describe TM (Li, *et al.*, 2018).

Stahl *et al.* as cited in (Scullion *et al.* 2010) broadly describe GTM as a firms endeavor to “attract, select, develop and retain key talented employees on a global scale” (p.4).

Similarly, Vaiman *et al.* (2012) describe GTM as incorporating organisational policies that promote development, retention, recruitment and selection, of highfliers in key international roles. Both descriptions however, are focused on top performers and geared towards strategic positions instead of non strategic ones.

Makarem *et al.* (2019), view TM's logic as "premised on the skills and capacities of senior male executives" and the conceptualisation of TM as a strategic position and "the property of elite leaders" (p.187). Throughout literature the elitist discourse has been prevalent. For example, in Vaiman's *et al.* (2012) meta review of TM it is asserted that even if there are no agreements on TM's definition, we are starting to comprehend that outcomes around TM practices "often reflect belief around inter alia, the level of exclusivity versus inclusivity of talent" (p. 1737).

2.6 Inclusivity versus Exclusivity

The two dominating TM themes in big organisations are the inclusive (IA) or exclusive (EA) approaches to TM (Collings and Mellahi 2009). An IA sees every individual as talented and are provided with prospects to improve their knowledge and competences, in contrast EA is geared toward high achievers (Makarem *et al.* 2019; Stewart and Rigg 2011).

Many businesses have adopted an EA (Garavan *et al.* 2012) focusing on key or high-potentials (CIPD, 2021a) that motivates the 20% of workers considered invaluable contributors to the company's performance (Kabwe and Okorie 2019; Swailes 2013). Scholars have criticised EA underpinning TM's logic for being elitist and seen to be benefiting mostly white male executives (Mellahi and Collings 2010).

From a feminist postructuralist lens Makarem *et al.* (2019), view an EA approach to TM as unfavourable and disadvantageous for female and other minorities. Building on Collinson and Hern's (1994), view that women's work ethics is collaborative whereas men's is individualised, Makarem *et al.* (2019) contend that talent identification is an individualised process. Hence undermining "collaboration and teamwork dynamics often associated with female and feminine characteristics" (p. 187).

Stewart and Rigg (2011) argue that knowledge intensive businesses that are extremely dependent on specialist knowledge and highly skilled individuals associate “talent with positions” are more likely to adopt EA deemed critical for succession planning and organisational survival. Conversely, businesses that associate “talent as individuals” identifies everyone as suitable for TM irrespective of their status, tend to embrace an IA.

Empirical evidence indicates that companies are slowly adopting both approaches, also called hybrid or blended (CIPD 2021; Garavan *et al.* 2012).

2.7 Retention and Turnover

Employee retention is recognised as having a positive impact on organisations. It is involved with retaining and supporting workers to remain in the organisation. However, retention and turnover are intricately linked. Some level of attrition though can benefit organisations mainly if it is the departure of poor performers. However, it can be damaging if there are high levels of attrition amongst particularly skilled and effective individuals.

Turnover can incur both direct and indirect costs for an organisation. Literature has shown numerous implications of turnover in organisations such as loss of institutional knowledge, negative impact on business performance, hiring cost, bad reputation, low performance of new employees, negative effect on colleagues and clients and low morale (CIPD 2021; Fellay 2021; Taylor 2019; Mohamed 2015; Torrington *et al.*, 2005).

While it is difficult to measure turnover’s direct and indirect costs, Fellay (2021) estimates turnover replacement cost to be half to twice a person’s yearly salary. Forbes (2022), estimates turnover costs to be one trillion dollars yearly for US businesses. Hence the importance for organisations to investigate why employees leave and take proactive measures to address the issues.

2.8 Turnover identification

Taylor (2019) claims that turnover Identification is crucial to efficient retention. Waning trust between staff and employer can partly contribute to talent mobility and autonomy (Bohmer and Schinnenburg 2016). Two main reasons have been identified in literature as to

why employees leave their organisations: *the pull factor* where individuals leave to work somewhere else; *the push factor* where individuals leave due to dissatisfaction with the job or the organisation (Taylor 2019; Armstrong and Taylor 2012; Torrington *et al.* 2005). Women and LGBT people are more inclined to be unduly “subject to push factors such as discrimination, exclusion and barriers at work” (CIPD 2021b).

High turnover level is indicative of poor management (Torrington *et al.* 2005) leading to disengagement and is a major attrition factor (CIPD 2021b). Hence the crucial importance of having good interaction between managers and employees (Dawn and Biswas 2013). Managerial support and good employee-managers relationship instigates positive employees’ behaviour and attitude. As observed by Yousaf *et al.* (2014) adequate management support, guidance is not provided to women as they are not “considered equal to and as not as credible as male employees” (p.2).

Krishnan’s (2009) quantitative study of the causes of attrition among females on top management team (TMT) indicated that women were twice as likely to leave compared to males in the same position. The author highlighted the significance of turnover as women continue to progress in big organisations and stressed the value of understanding the contributing factors of turnover amongst women. The author identified three factors namely environmental, organisational, and individual (see Figure 2) as having an impact on turnover amongst women.

Factors impacting on turnover amongst women in TMT (Krishnan 2009)	
Environmental level:	<p><i>munificence</i>- the extent to which sustained growth is supported by excess resources provided by the environment.</p> <p><i>dynamic environments</i> - women valuable skills to improve productivity, alleviate stress, change adaptation, conflict resolution, motivating others are deemed crucial to tackling unstable environment.</p> <p><i>complex environment</i> also found to reduce turnover - women being more inclined to power and information sharing are deemed to be better equipped to dealing with complex environments than men.</p>
Organisational level	diversity at different level of the team and how the TMT is composed; the size and operational contexts and psychological barriers to women's advancement are created in big organisations that are rooted in routines with established old-boy network.
Individual level	arising from psychological characteristics, that is, the differences between how men and women are socialised in the organisation; and demographic characteristics, that is, self-identification as members of an exclusive group. Women faces major barriers such as absence of good mentors; dearth of on-the-job prospects that can propel lower-level employees; and incapacity "to enter the old boy network" (p.1183).

Figure 2: *Factors impacting on turnover amongst women in TMT; Source (Krishnan 2009)*

While Ghosh *et al.* (2013) concurred with identifying turnover factors, they would argue that it was crucial and advantageous for organisations to identify factors behind workers intention to stay. They assert that organisations proactivity can reduce costs associated with turnover. While not gender specific, the authors found that job security, higher benefits, compensation package, location of the organisation, and job characteristics were some factors identified as reasons why employees decided to stay with their organisations.

For the purpose of our study, we have analysed the common causes of attrition or intention to leave amongst women from Publicjobs.ie (2022), Deloitte (2022), CIPD (2021), McKinsey (2021) and PwC (2017) a synthesis of which is shown in figure 3.

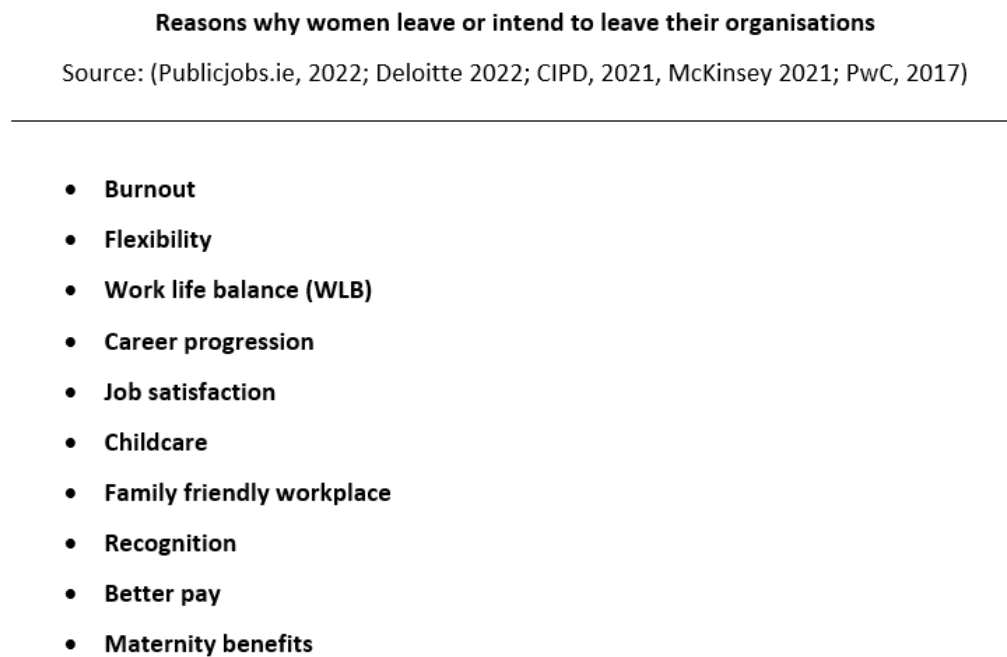


Figure 3: *Reasons why women leave or intend to leave their job* Source: (Publicjobs.ie,2022; Deloitte 2022; CIPD, 2021, McKinsey 2021; PwC, 2017).

2.9 Retention Strategies (RS)

RS is an approach conducted by businesses to dissuade valuable employees to look for a different job (Carbery and Cross 2013). Most RS are rooted in the TM concept and is crucial for the retention of key workers and remain competitive.

CIPD (2021b) suggests that pay and benefits improve retention as well as practices such as flexibility, wellbeing, fairness, employee voice and career development have shown to positively impact retention. However, their survey of 2021 revealed that only a small number of companies have RS in place. Ahmad (2013) and Deery (2008) found that training

and development (T&D) are strongly linked to employee's retention in addition to commitment and satisfaction.

Krishnan (2009) recommends that it was imperative for organisations regardless of their industries even those that were highly bureaucratic “to create a climate that is more likely to assimilate differences, is holistic, and is more conducive to the management styles of women” to reduce turnover (p.1185). As employees have different reasons to leave an organisation, several strategies have to be implemented to successfully retain employees.

Based on the earlier view by Bruckmüller and Braun (2020) that gender inequality is triggered by various factors. And Kossiv et al.'s (2016) position that retention is determined by a cluster of factors as opposed to a single issue. We have therefore identified recurrent themes in literature of the common causes of turnover or intention to leave amongst women from figure 3.

The recurrent themes were namely burnout, flexibility, WLB, career progression, job satisfaction, recognition, and childcare. We subsequently looked at RS that will address these issues that were grouped under 4 sub-topics as follows: *flexibility/work life balance* - will also include burnout and job satisfaction; *health and wellbeing*; *Talent and Development* – will include managerial support, job satisfaction, recognition; and *career progression/succession planning*.

2.9.1 Flexibility/Work Life Balance (WLB)

Flexibility is becoming increasingly important in the workplace and more so since the pandemic. It is a form of working schedule that provides a level of “flexibility on how long, where, when and at what times employees work” (CIPD 2022). Research has shown that both organisations and workers alike benefit from flexible working (FW). Organisations that have a higher rate of FW arrangements saw 137% higher headcount increase (LinkedIn 2020). However, only 33% of women reported having FW policies in their organisation (Deloitte 2022).

Research shows that even if made available to all employees, FW and WLB arrangements uptake by male employees are lower compared to women due to resulting lower income, employment uncertainty and negative impact on career progression (Publicjobs.ie, 2022;

Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard 2014; Cross and Linehan 2006). However, Atkinson and Hall (2009) argue that gender role, societal expectations, the idea of men being primary bread winners and women as primary care givers are “barriers to men accessing the formal FW practices” (p. 653).

Ominously, 94% of women responded that their likelihood of promotion will be jeopardised if requesting FW, 59% reported non-inclusive behaviour, 60% hybrid workers felt excluded from meetings and 45% reported they do not get sufficient exposure to leaders hence impacting on career progression (Deloitte 2022).

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) found two limitations regarding the implementation of WLB in organisations. First - a hostile organisational culture; and second - women make career choices based on a set of factors that are complicated and inter-related. Therefore, WLB must be combined with challenging job and prospects for the development of women.

An examination of WLB strategies by Doherty as cited in Deery (2008) in relation to women noted they were beneficial only when labour market was tight. The author suggested that both male and female workers be provided with more balanced lives for “stronger equal opportunities approach” (p.800). Organisations should endeavour to provide a balance for their employees work environment and their home life to enhance retention (Deery 2008).

2.9.2 Health and Wellbeing (HWB)

The issue of burnout and stress has been at the forefront of debates recently. Wellbeing is described by CDC (2018) as looking at life positively, feeling great and full of vitality. HWB has a positive outcome on individuals, communities, society, and economies. Fostering HWB at work enhances employee’s engagement, job satisfaction, productivity, commitment, reduces stress and generates a good working atmosphere (Deloitte 2022; CIPD 2022b; CDC 2018; Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard 2014).

CIPD (2022b) states that workers HWB must be a core component of any HR procedures and central to how a company functions. However, they found that half of organisations do not have a formal HWB strategy and further added that employee’s main health risk was psychological. One third of women took time off due to mental health challenge and 53%

reported higher stress level on previous year (Deloitte 2022). Depression, anxiety, and stress resulted in the loss of 18 million working days in 2019/20 while ill health accounted to 14.5 million working days (CIPD 2022b).

Despite the disturbing statistics, CIPD's (2022a) survey noticed a decline in HWB activities and management focus on HWB compared with the first year of the pandemic. Given the high incidence of burnout amongst women, this can negatively impact on retention and equality.

2.9.3 Training and development (T&D)

Development is described by Armstrong and Taylor (2012) as learning activities designed to prepare individuals to "exercise wider or increased responsibilities" whereby self-directed learning is emphasised (p.674). T&D is a methodical approach to developing workers skills, capabilities and expertise to enhance organisational efficiency (Aguinis and Kraiger 2009) and gives the chance to employees to acquire skill, knowledge and abilities (Fletcher *et al.* 2018).

T&D improves employee-employer relationship and positively enhance individual and team performance (Aguinis and Kraiger 2009). LinkedIn (2020) survey found that 53% lower attrition was observed for organisations that rated highly on employee training. However, according to CIPD's (2020a) report, only 29% of organisations have clear learning and development strategies for their workers and only 21% of organisations still rely on classroom-based training with no technology to support training.

Fletcher *et al.* (2018) study found that T&D was strongly correlated with job satisfaction and employees intention to stay. Wilkinson and Redman (2013) concur that organisation investing in their employee's development send a strong signal that there is a career prospect, subsequently leading to increased motivation, engagement and lower turnover hence protecting the organisation from skills scarcities.

Wilkinson and Redman (2013) explain that while good T&D has the potential to change lives significantly and help mitigate discrimination against minorities and women that not all T&D was a 'good thing'. They assert that "not all training is development and not all

development is integrated into work” (p.146). Therefore, there is the risk that the system is strengthening disadvantage and equip individuals only for minimum-wage occupation or “horizontal movement between a range of low-skilled jobs” (p.146).

While Wilkinson and Redman (2013) made an interesting point, it can be argued that several organisations have flat structures. Therefore, in some instances horizontal movement can be an opportunity for women to re-skill and upskill and enhance their career prospects.

2.9.4 Career progression and succession planning

Careers were traditionally described in terms of an employee’s relationship to an employer. However, environmental changes have transformed conventional organisational structures, work contexts and the employee-employer relationships altering how people perform their career (Sullivan and Baruch 2009). Career programmes provide employees with a structure that allows them to progress within the organisation.

Career progression is also a factor leading to women leaving or intention to leave (Deloitte 2022; McKinsey & Company 2021; PwC 2022). The most cited reason of the 22% of women who have left their employer since the pandemic was dearth of opportunities to progress (Deloitte 2022). Cross and Linehan (2006) found that traditional role played by women at home makes their careers more complex than males and highlight the “disproportionate responsibility for domestic work and childcare” (p. 21).

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) used the kaleidoscope metaphor to analyse women’s career decisions. They found women’s career to be relational, as each action taken is evaluated on the impact on others and its long lasting effects. They noticed that predominant issues at different life stages became parameters or motivators for pivotal decisions in the womens’ career. The three parameters identified were:

- *challenge*- more dominant at the earlier stage as women seek more responsibility, stimulation and career advancement;
- *balance* - in mid-career stage, women are more concerned about making their lives a “coherent whole” by balancing relational demands that is family, children, elderly parents and take on flexible schedules and modify their career aspirations, and;

- *authenticity*- gains importance in late career stages where decisions made are more suited to self and on one's own terms.

Cross and Linehan's (2006) interviewees considered that a career development model recognising various life paths and allowing for their varied professional and personal experiences would have been beneficial.

2.9.4.1 Succession planning

SP is intricately linked to career progression. However, challenges can arise in organisations as they must have mechanisms in place and options such as a pool of individuals or other alternatives to choose from (Cunningham 2007). Organisations use SP management to analyse and evaluate talent.

Torrington *et al.* (2005) contend that SP is mainly reserved for key roles and high potential individuals. Armstrong and Taylor (2012) explain that SP is based on data gathered by managers from supply and demand forecasts, analyses, performance, and appraisal.

Direct managers are in control of who they identify for the talent pool (van Zyl *et al.* 2017), a decision probably affected by their personal beliefs about women (Cross and Linehan 2006). Bohmer and Schinnenburg (2016) observed that recently graduated male highfliers were identified early on by their managers.

Cunningham (2007) contend that discriminatory inclinations can inhibit the identification of potential substitutes whereby managers from ethnic minorities or females are not considered as replacement for a white male. A view shared by Cross and Linehan (2006) stating that the "informality in selection and promotion procedures is often at the root of gender segregation" (p.37).

However, CIPD (2020) would argue that the increasing acknowledgement of inclusion and diversity in organisations as having enhanced awareness, fairness and transparency regarding SP. They also observed a decline in the secret nature of SP and an increase in lateral move instead of upwards move as organisations nowadays are less hierarchical.

2.10 Research Gap

Even if there is considerable interest in TM and gender only a few articles were found. Tatli, et al., (2012) study about the relevance of gender quota in the Asia Pacific region based on country reports and academic literature; Paul *et al.*, (2021) exploratory case study was focused on females executives career issues in Indian IT industry; Bohmer and Schinnenburg (2016) reviewed the literature to analyse the “gender and career concept on GTM”. However, as highlighted by Paul *et al.* (2021) the association between “TM and gender are not well developed” (p.561).

Makarem *et al.* (2019) called for future study to expand the TM literature to “include and incorporate HRM policy issues related to gender discrimination, bias and prejudice” (p.190). While they all differ in their focus and methodologies they all called for the links between TM and gender to be researched. However, currently there is no literature on TM and gender available in the Irish context.

Established on Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, (2020) emphasis about the extremely context-dependent nature of TM and its impact on implementation and efficiency and gap identified in the literature, the current study therefore will be focused in the Irish context.

2.11 Conclusion of literature review

The literature reviewed has contributed to our understanding of the ongoing debate and complexity of TM’s conceptual framework. It has also helped understanding the emergence of gender inequality. Existing gap in the literature regarding TM and gender was uncovered. Centered on the importance of contextual factors, we have focused our attention on women working in MNC in Ireland. And how TM and RS are promoting or hindering gender equality at different levels of the organisation. We have identified some turnover or intent to leave factors amongst women. Further analysis of these individual factors has given an insight into the emergence of gender inequality.

Next chapter is the methodology that will outline the research method undertaken, data collection and justification for the design and instrument used.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Methodology is described by Brown (2006) as the “philosophical framework within which the research is conducted or the foundation upon which the research is based” (p.12). It indicates the approach or concept that underpins the study (Blaxter *et al.* 2010). Research alternatively is defined as “an activity that involves finding out, in a more or less systematic way, things you did not know” (Walliman 2011 p.7). The purpose of methodology is firstly to ensure it is appropriate in order to achieve desired objectives. Secondly, the methodology used must be easily replicated in other studies of the same kind.

3.2 Research Objective

The key purpose of the study was to explore the feelings and perspectives of female employees towards the relationship between TM practices and RS and gender equality in the Irish context and by doing so to assist in responding to skill shortages. The study will also help explore the effectiveness of TM practices on retention of women and whether gender is an impacting element. Previous studies raised the issues in different countries but not in Ireland. The proposed research will focus on women in the Irish workforce. Findings can be used for future research and also by HR practitioners and organisations to enhance or develop their existing strategies to improve women’s retention and gender equality. The overall research objective is to answer the main research question:

What are the thoughts and perspectives of female employees within multinational corporations in Ireland on how talent management and retention strategies influence gender equality?

Following are the sub objectives that we drew from the literature review that will help us answer our main research topic question:

Talent management and retention strategies in multinationals (MNC) – how gender imbalance emerge?

- What do women think the gender issues within MNC's at different level of the organisation are?
- Do women feel that MNC in Ireland design TM and RS to lessen gender inequality
- Do women think that TM and RS widen the gender inequality gap
- Do women think that TM and RS could be better to cater for more opportunities?

3.3 Research Philosophies

Research philosophies according to Saunders *et al.* (2007) relates to the “systems of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge” (p.130). The research design is determined by the philosophical methodology. Therefore, it is important to indicate the philosophical approach inherent to the research. Ontology and Epistemology are the two main philosophical approaches. Researchers make assumptions during the study process. The choice of the philosophical approach will be based on the insight and objectives sought.

3.4 Ontology

Ontology indicates assumption about how the social world is considered. It concerns the perception of social entities to be seen as being objective or subjective (Dudovskiy 2022). It is the “science or study of being and what can be assumed about the nature and reality of the social phenomena that make up the social world” (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.479). Ontology is a doctrine that echoes a person's interpretation of what determines a fact and deemed as reality.

3.5 Epistemology

Epistemology refers “to a theory of knowledge” and denotes a view and an explanation for what can be considered knowledge (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.26). It centers on what is known as truthful and opposite to ontology's way of thinking (Dudovskiy 2022). Determining what constitutes knowledge and how information is gathered will subsequently guide how data will be collected and interpreted (Horn 2009). Positivism and interpretivism

are the social science research two main epistemological approaches (Pereira Heath and Tynan 2010).

3.5.1 Positivism

Positivism abides by the notion that just a “factual” understanding achieved through observation and measurement is reliable (Dudovskiy 2022). It contends that understanding of a social phenomenon is not subjective knowledge but rather on what can be studied and documented (Blaxter *et al.* 2010).

Positivism centres on data collection, statistical analysis, hypothesis and is associated with a quantitative approach. It is found to be inadequate for studying social phenomena by scientists. Therefore, a positivist approach will be deemed inappropriate for this study as we are seeking individuals’ perception.

3.5.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is an individual’s unique analysis and perception of societal experiences and their own actions (Matthews and Ross 2010). Otherwise known as interpretivist, it involves interpretation of the study’s elements as well as the integration of human interest (Dudovskiy 2022). Better insight of a person's experience, their relations with society and what it represents to them is gained through an interpretivist approach (Saunders *et al.* 2007). Interpretivist philosophy relies “on the critique of positivism and highlights qualitative over quantitative analysis” (Dudovskiy 2022).

According to Dudovskiy (2022) a major drawback of interpretivism can potentially be researcher’s bias as the data generated cannot be generalised and can be influenced by personal perspectives and values. On a positive note, however, the author explained that data produced from interpretivist research can be linked with high validity level due to honest and trustworthy primary data generated.

The epistemological option deemed appropriate for this study is interpretivist. As this current research will be viewed from the perspective of women, we believe that a qualitative approach will be appropriate.

3.6 Qualitative approach as chosen research method

Given the exploratory nature of this study the preferred option was the qualitative approach. It was chosen to better understand the feelings, experience, and perception of the participants. The aim of qualitative research is to ensure higher level of “depth of understanding” and are “associated with words, sounds, feeling, emotions, and other non-quantifiable elements” (Dudovskiy 2022). A view shared by Bryman (2004) stating that emphasis is on words rather than quantitative assessment in qualitative research. The author further explained that an inductive and discovery focused approach is primarily followed in qualitative research.

Literature about TM and RS indicates that various methods have been used to collect and analyse data. The use of more than one method is common (Blaxter et al. 2010). Al Ariss *et al.*, (2014) advise that to avoid bias and have better accuracy while researching TM and RS, multiple methods be used. However, they stress that qualitative research provide a greater understanding of people’s experiences. Qualitative data can provide “information beyond statistics alone”, and notes taken during interview can add even more value (Al Ariss *et al.*, 2014).

3.7 Population and Sample

Population statistically indicates the overall number of cases which may be integrated as subjects in a study (Matthews and Ross 2010). Sample refers to certain cases that will assist the researcher delve into the research question (Blaxter *et al.*, 2010). The focal point of the research being on the retention and under representation of female. The targeted population was women. Women currently working or who have recently lost their job in an Irish based foreign MNC were approached for sampling.

Participants were recruited by means of social media on LinkedIn, WhatsApp and in person. Researcher’s acquaintances were contacted with the view of having a snowballing effect. Researcher’s target was to have between ten to a maximum of twenty participants. A total of thirteen interviews were conducted as per figure 4. To ensure anonymity all participants names were replaced by “WP1” for the first interviewee to “WP13” for the last one.

Participants	Interview Date	Role and length of service in current organisation	Duration
WP1	29.05.2022	Content reviewer 8 months	27mins 5s
WP2	29.05.2022	Client success specialist 2 months	31mins 3s
WP3	30.05.2022	HR operation specialist 2 months	1hr 4mins
WP4	31.05.2022	Customer service agent 11 years	29mins 30s
WP5	31.05.2022	Content reviewer 9 months	29mins 35s
WP6	01.06.2022	HR Manager in construction 15 years of which 5 HR	37mins 32s
WP7	02.06.2022	Content reviewer 9 months.	24mins 6s
WP8	03.06.2022	HR manager in manufacturing 6 years	30mins 30s
WP9	08.06.2022	EMEA recruiter 3 years	43mins 7s
WP10	08.06.2022	Executive assistant 16 months	36mins 53s
WP11	09.06.2022	Senior Knowledge Specialist 14 years	49mins 12s
WP12	16.06.2022	Senior Customer Support Agent 4 years	34 mins 54s
WP13	21.06.2022	Internal Career Specialist Recruiter 1 year	20 mins 35s

Figure 4: Interview participants

3.8 Research instrument

The research instrument in qualitative analysis is often depicted as being the researcher according to Maguire and Delahunt (2017). They explained that the researcher's capability to identify, explain and understand events and perceptions is crucial to finding meaning in specific situations and contexts. This study comprised of semi-structured interview. Qualitative data collection such as observation and interview are used for an interpretivist approach (Matthews and Ross 2010). In qualitative research interviewing is considered as the most prevalent form of data collection (Jamshed 2014).

Given that there were no prior studies on the subject, open-ended questions were devised based on literature reviewed. A complete list of the questions can be seen in Appendix 3. All the participants were asked the same questions. The only variations were for question 3 whereby questions 3.1, 3.1 (a) and 3.1 (b) were asked to participants who were staying in their organisations. And question 3.2, 3.2 (a) and 3.2 (b) were asked to participants who were leaving their organisations. Our aim is to understand women's feelings towards TM and RS on gender. Therefore, questions were formulated around the reasons influencing women to leave or stay in their organisations, their thoughts about the different TM and RS practices, as well as what they thought were the different existing gender issues.

All interviews were audio recorded and automatically transcribed. According to Jamshed, (2014) recording of interviews capture data more efficiently and allows the researcher to focus on the subject matter. Consequently, during the interviews the researcher didn't take notes and was able to focus on the conversation. It was stated in the information sheet sent to the participants that the interviews were going to be audio recorded only. However, four out of the 13 candidates felt more comfortable having the camera on during the recording.

3.9 Research Process

Once participants have agreed to take part in the research project, they were sent a consent form as well as the research objectives and outline by email. Face to face interviews were initially being considered. However, due to ongoing unease around the pandemic and some participants working remotely, for consistency it was decided to conduct all the interviews

via Microsoft Teams. Following participants approval interviews were arranged and a Microsoft Teams invite was sent.

Interviews were conducted between the 29th of May 2022 and 21st of June 2022. They lasted between 20 minutes to 1 hour. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher had the camera on to greet the participants and create rapport and trust. Participants were informed that interviews were going to be audio recorded only. Nine interviews were audio recorded only. However, four participants expressed the willingness to have the camera on as it was more comfortable for them.

3.10 Data analysis

Analysing data is crucial to trustworthy qualitative data (Maguire and Delahunt 2017). The study's data was transcribed and thematically analysed. Qualitative data is analysed using a method called thematic analysis (Caulfield 2019). It is a method of finding patterns or themes (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) and "offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing quantitative data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.77). However, potential risks involved in using thematic analysis are overlooking data nuances and reliance on the researcher's assessment due to the subjective nature of the analysis (Caulfield 2019; Braun and Clarke 2006).

An inductive approach as opposed to a deductive approach to analysing data was used. The approach consisted of the coding of every single line. An inductive approach allows emergence of themes from the data. On the other hand, a deductive approach is logical whereby specific conclusion is reached from the research.

While many methods exist to conduct thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-steps framework is deemed the most influential (Maguire and Delahunt 2017). The framework as per Table 3.1 recreated from Braun and Clarke (2006), Caulfield (2019), and Maguire and Delahunt (2017), below was used in the current research. While all the transcripts were automatically generated by Microsoft Teams some adjustments had to be brought to ensure that the audio version matches the transcripts. In doing so the researcher had the opportunity to familiarise with the data.

Table 3.1**Braun and Clarke (2006) 6-steps framework**

Step 1: Familiarisation	Familiarising with the data Reading over the transcripts several times to familiarise with the data.
Step 2: Coding	Creating initial codes Data is organised meaningfully and systematically. Sections of texts are highlighted and given codes to illustrate their contents.
Step 3: Generating themes	Searching for themes A theme will only be determined by its importance. There are no rules on what constitutes a theme. Patterns are identified from codes created to generate themes.
Step 4: Reviewing themes	Themes reviewed Preliminary themes found in step 3 are modified, developed and reviewed to ensure accuracy.
Step 5: Defining and naming theme	Defining themes Each final list of the themes is named and defined. The objective is “to identify the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun and Clarke’s 2006 p.92) and identifying how it assists in interpreting the data.
Step 6: Writing up	Writing up the analysis

Table 3.1: Source, Caulfield (2019), Maguire and Delahunt (2017), Braun and Clarke (2006)

3.11 Pilot Interview

A pilot interview was conducted on the 29th of May that lasted 30 minutes. It was conducted to ensure relevance and clarity of the questions as well as the duration of the interview. It was used to evaluate the reliability of the recording device on the laptop that

was used during the interview via Microsoft Team as well as ensuring automatic availability of transcripts. Questions that arose during the interview were sent to the research supervisor for clarification and no major changes were brought. The pilot interview result is also included in the findings and analysis section.

3.12 Limitation

A limitation of the study is that with only thirteen participants the results or finding cannot be generalised. The focus on MNCs is also a limitation as only the perception of individuals with experience in this specific kind of setting is considered.

The research is being conducted at a point in time whereby all the participants are at a specific stage in their lives. If the same questions were asked to them in the future the answers might differ.

Reliability and validity of qualitative approach can also be a limitation; however, the research aim is to start the debate on this topic. Another limitation is the researcher's lack of experience in doing research, which might have compromised the magnitude and level of discussions.

Given that nine out of thirteen interviews were audio recorded only, the researcher could not take cues from the participants body language and facial expressions.

3.13 Ethical Consideration

A priority throughout this study was the ethical considerations as it is deemed a crucial component of research. When conducting research, to limit causing harm or humiliating participants ethics must be considered (Saunders *et al.* 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2011) research ethics pertains to every circumstance "where moral considerations related to the appropriateness, fairness, and reasonableness of a study arise" and pertains to every data collection and analysis component (p.112). It is particularly crucial when "human subjects or research participants" are involved (Bryman and Bell 2011, p.112).

The research questions were approved by the researcher's supervisor. Prior to the start of the interview, participants were issued with a document requesting their consent. An

information sheet outlining the objective of the study, approximate time of interview process and confirmation of anonymity and confidentiality was also sent. Participants were not asked to disclose their identity or that of their organisation. Any identifiable data have been concealed in the final research. Participants were informed that only information provided during the interview will be included in the study. Should they have any queries, the researcher's email address and telephone number were provided. Participants were notified that their contribution was voluntary, should they want to withdraw they could do so at any stage.

3.14 Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at the methodology and illustrated the aims and objectives of the study. We have also outlined the appropriate research method and justification for choosing a qualitative approach. Collection and interpretation of data has also been discussed. The limitation and ethical considerations have also been examined.

In the next chapter we are going to present the findings and analysis. Emerging themes and sub-themes will be presented.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Analysis of the findings from data gathered are presented in this chapter. The key purpose of the study was to explore the feelings and perspectives of female employees towards the relationship between TM practices and RS and gender equality in the Irish context.

This chapter contributes to addressing the main research question of this dissertation –

What are the thoughts and perspectives of female employees within multinational corporations in Ireland on how talent management and retention strategies influence gender equality?

4.2 Participants demographic

The sample selection for this research was outlined in Chapter 3. The research was conducted amongst women working in foreign owned MNC's in Ireland. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over a three-week period over Microsoft Teams. The sample consisted of thirteen women referenced as WP1, WP2 up to WP13 to maintain confidentiality.

4.3 Method

Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-steps framework was used by the researcher. This approach assisted with the identification and development of themes and sub-themes from the interview transcripts. Emerging main themes and sub themes correlating with the main research question and objectives will be outlined in the following sections. The themes and sub themes will be analysed with the literature.

4.4 Thematic Analysis

Table 4.1 below provides an overview of participants responses to questions 1, 2 and 3. These questions served as a warmup and prepared the ground for following questions that were specific to our research objectives. Question 1 asked about the participants length of

service in their current organisation. Question 2 pertained to the participants current role results of which are outlined in figure 2 in Chapter 3. Question 3 related to the participant's thought regarding whether they were staying or leaving the organisation.

Their initial responses to the important factors that motivates them to stay or leave are illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Initial responses on motivating factors to stay or leave

Participants	Staying or leaving	Motivating factors
WP1	Leaving	"Because since it's multinational, it is like you don't, you are I want to say that you're just number, but you are not taking into consideration as much as I would like to"
WP2	Staying for another 10 years or more	"there's a lot of options and opportunities there for people in general"
WP3	Staying for a more than 5-6 years	"You know, for me, one of the most important things really is the compensation package"
WP4	Staying for 1 year	"I suppose the company, their culture, and my colleagues and the job itself I enjoy"
WP5	Staying for less than 1 year	"Uh for my curriculum in general, and also because of the I think the. The prestige."
WP6	Staying for next 3 years	"I suppose with the new position that I've gotten new responsibilities"
WP7	Staying for 1 year if internal move successful	"Lots of opportunities with different clients and different roles and you can have a career progression and also the benefits."
WP8	Staying long term	"So probably first and foremost it's the, it's the job satisfaction as an HR manager"
WP9	Staying long term	"I have a few answers... my role I think is very autonomous; I'm feeling well cared for; the teams and the people"

WP10	Staying indefinitely	"Kind of synergy I have to work well with both my superiors and the people around me. So, I it has to be a good atmosphere. It has to be a good working environment; and also, the remote working was actually a factor"
WP11	Leaving	"The inability to progress in my career that's certainly a big factor in my decision to move on"
WP12	Staying indefinitely	"So that would be the culture and value of the company and they really manage their employees with compassion and was like human feeling and we are considerate and we are not just a number in a company. We are really a person where they try to develop us"
WP13	Staying for another 5-6 years	"The team, the feeling with the team, the benefit to that, I am getting them and I'm not talking just about the money, I'm talking about the work life balance."

However, as the interviews progressed it became evident that participants had more than one factor influencing their decisions. Table 4.2 below shows the different factors gathered throughout the interviews.

Table 4.2

Other motivating factors influencing intention to stay or leave

Participants	Staying or leaving	Other motivating factors
WP1	Leaving	Flexibility, location of the organisation, gain more experience in field studied
WP2	Staying for another 10 years or more	Treated well, do not feel like a number, several benefits, inclusive organisation
WP3	Staying for a more than 5-6 years	Feeling valued and opportunities for career progression, extra paid leave
WP4	Staying for 1 year	Job satisfaction, good working environment

WP5	Staying for less than 1 year	International exposure
WP6	Staying for next 3 years	Enjoy working in MNC, freedom
WP7	Staying for 1 year if internal move successful	Job satisfaction, engagement, good benefits
WP8	Staying long term	Organisational culture, ability to add value, flexibility, location, and trust
WP9	Staying long term	Managerial support, trust, feel cared for, clear career opportunities, autonomy
WP10	Staying indefinitely	WLB, everyone is valued, well cared for, recognition, trust
WP11	Leaving	Remote working a disadvantage as no WLB, breakdown in relationship with organisation, burnout, no HWB initiatives, culture
WP12	Staying indefinitely	Men and women are both equal, opportunities for growth, genuine interest in employees, benefits, flexibility, WLB, community spirit
WP13	Staying for another 5-6 years	Good WLB, Flexibility, career progression, trusted by management, support from colleagues, autonomy, and equal treatment of men and women

Only two participants stated they were leaving. Eleven participants indicated how long they intended to stay in their respective organisation as per Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Planning on how long participants will stay or quit

Leaving	Quit within 1 year	Staying 3 years	Staying 5 to 6 years	Staying long term
2	3	1	2	5

It was noted that six participants who intend to stay long term in their organisation share a strong sense of belonging and inclusion. *“We do have a strong company culture in terms of inclusion and belonging...”* WP9. This was evident in the way they referred to their

organisations with words or phrases such as “never felt different” WP13, “everybody feels comfortable ... and they belong” WP9 and “make big effort for inclusion” WP2.

Participant WP12 said that she felt as being part of a “community” and further acknowledged:

“ There is no discrimination. You’re male female, you have kids, you are old you are young, you are coloured. Whatever. There’s really no discrimination. And so, if you are motivated and you’re willing to put yourself out there Your manager is going to support you whatever it takes”

The participants emphasised valuing the importance of their team, colleagues and the good relationship. Hence assenting with Makarem *et al.* (2019) view that women’s work ethics is collaborative. Various reasons were provided by the participants as to why they chose to leave or stay. This mirrors previous studies that turnover identification. intention and retention are each caused by a cluster of factors as opposed to one (CIPD 2021b; Kossiv *et al.* 2016; Krishnan 2009).

4.5 Related themes objective one

Table 4.4

Related themes objective one

Main Theme	Sub themes
Under representation at every level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women’s role vs men’s role • Lack of respect, male culture, and different treatment

4.5.1 Under representation at every level

When asked about the gender issues that exist at different levels of their organisations, the main theme that emerged was varied degree of under representation. Seven participants reported that women were underrepresented at every level. Four responded that women

were represented at every level. Participants observed that at entry level there is a balance between male and female but not at managerial level.

WP3 stated that her CEO was female. However, she said that it was too early for her to say as she only started in her organisation. WP2 observed that:

“My team leader is a woman, my manager is a man, his manager is a man. His manager is a man and his manager is a man. So. That's my own personal hierarchy that I am in, so that's what I see. That's not to say there's not a single woman anywhere but I think there is definitely more men than women in leadership positions at the moment.”

WP5 acknowledged that she could not objectively say if it was representative of the whole organisation as she has only been working remotely, but observed: *“I'm not sure, but from for example the video calls that I have, I see probably more men than women”*.

WP7 noticed that during meetings:

“I can see that the team leaders mainly are men...there are five and just one of them is a woman. I mean it shouldn't mean necessarily that it's because they are discriminating.”

WP10 acknowledged that her organisation was a *“great environment for women”*.

However, upon reflection she said, *“it does give me pause to think”* and stated:

“Maybe they're not as supportive as they think they are or maybe, you know, maybe the opportunities aren't there even within our yeah, within our management team, not even the director team and our management team, it's I'm going to say 75 to 80% men, and yeah, which is concerning”.

The above findings echo the literature review that women are underrepresented in the workplace. The results also concur with Publicjobs.ie (2022) about the existence of gender inequality in every area of the Irish labour force.

4.5.2 Women's role vs men's role

According to some participants, there are other factors impacting on women's representation. They commented on the effect of role or occupational segregation on women and representation. WP9 gave the example of the sales department in her organisation as being male dominated. Similarly, WP8 observed that in her organisation the production department was predominantly female while the engineering department was male dominated.

WP6 raised the issue of the nature of the industry itself as having an impact:

"Yeah, the top level, I suppose to look at traditionally because we're construction firm, you tend to have usually accountants and engineers become the CEO, you know. And I think traditionally in our organization, women were always in the support functions, you know, like accounts administration."

WP6 further stated that there is a large gap between the support function and management in terms of their internal grading hence making it difficult for women in support roles to get promoted. Women are '*de facto*' eliminated in my organisation said WP11 as traveling is 70% part of the job, therefore not designed for individuals having caring responsibilities which she reckoned in most cases fall on women.

This finding concurs with Bohmer and Schinnenburg (2016) observation as seen earlier in the literature review that role stereotypes and expectations are additional barriers that women face.

4.5.3 Lack of respect, male culture, and different treatment

Several participants have expressed their feelings and perceptions about how women are treated in their organisations. Some shared their personal experiences. "*Men will get away with murder*" stated WP4. She further observed that in her organisation "*males would tend to get away with more non good behaviour than women*" and disciplinary actions will be taken against women and not men for the same wrongdoings.

WP5 however, would like to see women respected in everyday conversation. She recounted a meeting with her team leader for what she thought related to new maternity leave benefits:

"This is also respect becauseeven if I am young or single or whatever, I think since I am a woman and I am an employee of the company and you are likeexplaining to me all the benefits that I have. I think it is my right to know. I say this as a little bit discriminating in the sense that it was maybe insinuating something or not, but it was not his job. I mean his job was just to umm say that there was some updated that I will never know because he stopped the conversation"

WP9 thinks that women might feel uncomfortable working in a male dominated department as:

"very often they are just unconscious about the culture that is there ... male employee talking about, you know, everyday talks, team chats, joke."

A similar view is shared by WP6 regarding male dominated industry who states that:

"that whole thing of construction and men, you know, having the banter or the craic, but actually now it's bordering on bullying and stuff like that."

Participant WP11 believed that women should get assertiveness training to speak up for themselves as women are belittled and not taken seriously.

Results indicate there was a feeling of unfair treatment amongst some participants as to how women were treated compared to their male counterparts. There was also a strong perception of lack of respect reported.

4.6 Related themes objective two

Table 4.5

Related themes objective two

Main Theme	Sub themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility and work life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility issues, implementation, and consistency• FW and WLB to be normalised for men
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training and development• Health and wellbeing• Career progression and succession planning• Managerial support and impact	

4.6.1 Flexibility and work life balance

When asked about FW and WLB It was clear from the participants that more FW policies and implementation were born out of the pandemic. The result shows that eleven out of thirteen organisations have some type of FW practices in place. All participants highlighted the importance of FW practices and the benefits on their WLB. None have reported negative impact on CP or promotion when availing of FW practices.

Some participants shared that they avail of both formal and informal FW practices. WP13 stated that flexibility was a *“factor to retain me for instance”*.

WP10 gave an example of FW that suits her:

“we are able to remote work two days a week which at the moment is just perfect for me..... just a perfect balance I find anyway.”

While WP12 highlighted the importance of FW:

"Like for me it is very important, especially now after the two years of COVID like [I] have a kid. So, for me, having the possibility of flexibility is extremely important, extremely important."

The other participants reported different types of FW available to employees such as remote working, hybrid working and flexitime. However, WP5 said that aside from what she researched prior to joining her organisation, no FW policies has been communicated to her after she started.

WP6, WP8, WP10 and WP11 reported limited and very rigid FW practices and said things have been done the old ways and call for more flexibility. Some participants also reported a reduction in FW practices since the lifting of restrictions.

Participant WP1 cited the lack of flexibility as one motivating factor for leaving the organisation

"I worked remotely with them, but now they're talking about going to the office..... they haven't told us like you have the opportunity to work like hybrid mode so.... there's not much flexibility also in this sense."

Participant have also shared the different informal arrangements they have with their managers or teams. However, the result also illustrates some restrictive approaches to FW arrangements. This result concurs with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) finding that hostile organisational culture can restrict the implementation of FW and WLB.

6.2 Flexibility issues, implementation, and consistency

Many participants have spoken about the benefits of FW on their WLB. However, some have raised issues concerning some shortcomings of FW. For instance, WP11 stated that *"flexible working is good, but it has its downsides because the lines between work and the life are very, very blurred."* She further said that FW meant she had to be available anytime and commented that FW should not be imposed on individuals. WP7 also views imposed FW practices such as remote working as having a negative impact on employees' social life.

WP4 observed that FW did not work for people working shifts as there was no WLB. Similarly, WP7 stated that the introduction of new shifts has impacted on individual's WLB hence leading to high turnover in her organisation.

Although WP8 confirmed having limited FW practices in her organisation she said:

"Does feel I don't wouldn't say I feel wholly comfortable that you know, if I was to just say, oh, I'm gonna work from home a day, I feel that maybe....I don't feel that they would welcome that fully if you know if that makes sense."

WP8 reported a lack of trust and consistency in implementing the practices. WP6 also attributed the lack of trust in employees as a challenge for individuals to fully avail of FW practices.

Findings show that FW practices is also associated with negative feelings and outcomes. This assents with Lewis (2003) view that FW can also have negative outcomes and act as a double-edged sword. Some participants believe FW should not be imposed on individuals.

4.6.3 FW and WLB to be normalised for men

There is unanimity amongst the participants that men should feel comfortable to avail of FW practices in their organisations. Some participants believe that normalising the use of FW for men will relieve the pressure on women. Commenting about remote or hybrid working WP7 said *"I mean that is something that the father has to do, not just women."*

WP8 shared her view about FW practices:

"it's just it's more concerned that those policies are applicable across the board because in some cases particularly I have found here that so say we might have the father working here, you know and the mother is in a different job and she may be in a role that needs her to work longer hours. You know, we'd have the guy ask and you know for flexibility and needing to leave early to pick up kids and stuff. So, I think, it's a balance."

A view shared by WP6 who also commented for culture change in organisations:

"But I think parental policies and flexible work is probably important, but equally for men as well... Because if women are to enter the workforce ... get more promotion and at the higher-level jobs. Then companies need change. Their attitude not just for women on that, but also for men allowing their male, you know, the fathers, to have time off."

The findings show that there is consensus among the participants that male employees should feel comfortable to avail of FW practices. However, what the results also show is the need to change the culture and mindset to normalise uptake of FW practices in organisations.

4.6.5 Training and development

Participants were asked about the T&D initiatives that their organisations have implemented. However, the researcher noticed that WP7 was not asked this question. Therefore, findings for T&D are from twelve participants only. Eleven out of twelve participants reported availing of a mix of online and offline training.

WP12 explained the types of training available:

"I'm gonna say there's two types. So, there is the mandatory training that you need to follow for to be able to do your job and then there is the trainings that are offered for you to grow so."

Six participants reported that training was limited to performing their own job and not for self-development. WP4 reported that training was previously offered but has now ceased.

Five participants reported having an IA in their organisation with a mix of mandatory and personal growth T&D available for all the employees. They also reported having regular conversations with their managers to align T&D with their career expectations.

WP1 qualified initial training received when starting as inadequate. In contrast WP5 reported availing of intensive online training when starting. She stated it was beneficial in building her confidence to perform her job.

WP11 qualified T&D as a tick box exercise that was insufficient for a knowledge intensive organisation. She further stated that lack of T&D *“is another reason for which I'm leaving.”* On the contrary WP12 shared that her organisation investing in her development and growth is a personal retention factor. She shared that every employee avail of one day monthly that is dedicated to self-development.

WP2 also stressed the importance of development as it provides opportunities for promotion and *“otherwise, everybody which is still in this job for a year and a year and a half, and they would just leave”*.

The results show that only one organisation didn't provide T&D. Contrary to CIPD's (2020a) report that 21% of organisations were reliant on class-based training, all the organisations in our research offered online training. Participants also reported availing of different types of training such as mandatory ones, some specific for the job and others for self-development.

4.6.6 Health and Wellbeing

The issue of HWB and burnout is an aspect that is being taken seriously by organisations according to the participants. Our results show strong organisational commitment to employee's HWB. WP2 reported that *“they're very conscious of mental health at work”*. While WP13 acknowledged that *“we have a lot of benefit in terms of wellbeing”*

All but one participant reported having no HWB policies in place. WP11 said that the only HWB session was *“on the 8th of March and that's it”*. WP6 acknowledged that even if they have HWB policies and practices in place they were not well communicated to the employees and reckoned that more should be done.

Many participants reported availing of wellness and burnout classes online. They stated that these initiatives were greatly beneficial even if not specifically targeted for women.

The different HWB initiatives in organisations included, group sessions, one to one with professionals, employee assistance programmes, mindfulness, onsite gyms, refund for gym equipment's to be used at home for remote workers, massage, free food and drinks.

However, none of the participants have reported any changes in the HWB practices after the lifting of the pandemic restrictions. This finding contradicts CIPD's (2022b) that half of organisations as not having HWB strategies in place.

4.6.7 Career Progression and Succession Planning

When it comes to career progression opportunities, seven out of thirteen participants mentioned CP as a motivating factor to stay. One participant cited lack of CP as a factor leading her to leave.

Two respondents namely WP10 and WP11 said there were no CP opportunities in their organisations. Five participants reported having clear CP plan; one interviewee reported that the onus was on the employee to find out if there were upcoming roles available.

Four respondents were aware of the initiatives but said that same were not clearly communicated to the employees.

WP1 acknowledged there were *"a lot of opportunities inside the company itself. It's just something that if you want to know, you have to find it out or ask to your team leader."*

WP6 reported that CP was not based on gender but merit. Participant WP9 shared that being promoted during the pandemic has motivated her to stay. Only three participants reported being aware of SP processes their organisations had in place. WP3 explained that in her organisation individuals could get promoted within a team without taking their manager's position or a higher role.

On the other hand, WP10 commented that a lateral move in her organisation does not qualify as a promotion but a transfer. According to some participants even if there were CP policies and processes in place, the onus was on employees to put their names forward.

WP10 shared that her current job was monotonous. However, she added that while previously she would have looked for CP, now having children, her focus at this point in time was stability and a recession proof job.

Mixed results were obtained. While some organisations have CP processes in place they were not well communicated to the employees. On the other hand, some participants reported having clear career progression plan in place and are encouraged by their managers to reach their potentials.

4.6.8 Managerial support and impact

The results show that participants view managerial support as particularly important. Participants unanimously reported being supported, however WP1, WP11, WP8 shared that due to high workloads managers were not always available. Results show that managers were responsible for the implementation of organisational policies and practices.

WP6 shared an example of FW request:

"You know, women decided. OK, well, maybe I know I can't work five days a week anymore. I want to work part time, And that would generally be done between the line manager just locally themselves, or you know that specific unit director, shall we say."

WP2 also acknowledged *"That's probably just a flexibility that comes with my own team leader and my own manager."*

In terms of career progression, WP13 said that *"Uh, you can speak with your manager to see where do you see yourself in five years or seven years, three years and the work for that"*. While WP9 told about the significance of her manager's support in getting exposure and putting her name forward for new position:

“Hmm, very important part, because they would be the ones bringing my name forward when it comes to who does which project, who would look after which role.... And then I get the exposure that I can get the chance to show what I can do and that gives me then the chance to get promoted to, you know, work on different things, and develop.”

The results indicate the importance of managerial support for the participants. The data also shows that managers were responsible for the implementation of the different policies and practices.

4.7 Related themes objective three

Table 4.6

Related themes objective three

Main Themes	Sub themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender blind policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand scope to include female in career progression

4.7.1 Gender blind policies

All the participants made it clear throughout the interviews that their organisations did not have any policies specific for women.

In response to the question about HWB initiatives WP2 said *“again, I don't know if they're doing anything specific for women or for female employees, but they're very conscious of mental health at work.”* While WP4 response was *“we have with let's say an insurance provider where I could ring them up and let's say I have this issue and OK, it's not particularly female”.*

WP8 observation about CP and SP policies for women was *“we don't have anything specific for women or men. You know what I mean so it's consistent.”* While WP9 response was

“there is nothing specifically targeted to female employees, but in general. Umm, I think they do have a lot of stuff in place.”

WP6 thought regarding T&D initiatives was *“I mean, as far as training development goes, there's no differentiation between our male and female, you know, colleagues.”*

It is clear from the findings that all the organisations had gender blind policies. The results demonstrate a correlation with Makarem *et al.* (2019) and Amaral and Jaller's (2020) statements as seen earlier in the literature review that gender policies were blind.

4.7.1.1 Expand scope to include female in career progression

Many participants have suggested that regardless of the industry, role or position, scopes should be expanded to include female's progression. WP2 key observation was that women find it difficult to get promoted because *“we're moving in a system that wasn't designed for us”*.

A sentiment echoed by WP10 who after reflecting about her own organisation asked :

“Why is it all male directors at the moment? Why is there not been any female area managers that have not progressed? Where is it falling down? It cannot be every single female area manager wasn't good enough for the role.”

WP12 suggested that organisations should *“spread the word”* that male dominated roles *“are open to everyone”* and provide training for woman who might be interested so that *“they can also access that kind of job”*. Organisations *“need to give people the tools to grow”* says WP11. However, she emphasised that this should come after career progression has been clearly communicated to the employees.

Interestingly WP10 observed that while her organisation is not a specifically male or female dominated industry:

“The large majority of them are with women in the system pool as we would call them. And so, in all the different departments, I’m gonna say it’s probably over 90% female. ... in terms of career progression, there is none. I understand, it’s very, very, very rare that an assistant would get a management position...I think it’s only happened maybe four or five times in 20 something years”.

WP8 view is that organisations have to ensure that *“they [women] have the opportunities that they feel that they can apply for roles”*. WP2 pointed out that women need encouragement and feel valued to put themselves forward. WP6 commented that due to caring responsibilities not all women were ambitious and looking for promotion. However, she agreed that ambitious ones should be given the opportunity to progress.

We found that participants who view their organisation as fair, see the policies as being gender neutral. They think of their organisation as being very inclusive whereby both men and women are treated equally. As stated by WP13, in her organisation talent is perceived as being gender neutral *“it can be male or female or it can be anything .”* We also found was that individuals make career decisions based on various factors such as where they are at in life hence concurring with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005).

4.8 Related themes objective four

Table 4.7

Related themes objective four

Main Theme	Sub themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives to target female only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity training for managers Role model and mentoring

4.8.1 Initiatives to target female only

The main theme that arose was the need for organisations to acknowledge that there was a difference between men and women. Participants commented about the need to have initiatives specifically targeting women. The main debate was around policies for women's HWB. Participants acknowledged the importance that both men and women avail of HWB. However, they all conveyed the same message as WP3 *"that women's bodies don't function like men's"*.

WP8 stated that *"Say I'm back maybe to the wellbeing initiatives we could probably highlight that for women ... I would do more. We could do better on that."* A view shared by all the participants.

When discussing the HWB that would be beneficial for women the main factors that arose were menopause and period pain.

WP7 *"Yeah. Because, I mean, there are some women that. You have like real strong pain. Thought who makes them not to be able to work."*

Participants highlighted that female employees should not be penalised for taking time off at specific time of the month. They would like to see the introduction of specific initiatives for women in that sense.

WP3 *" I think we need to bear that in mind and to be able to introduce policies which support women who are having difficult time of the month is very important. But in particular as well, to have policies and programs which support... to then also introduce you know, policies that support women who are going through menopause."*

The issue of ageing workforce and female dominated industries or department was also raised. WP6 reported that *"generally the average age of our workforce for funny enough for men and women is 47"*.

WP8 “we probably have more female than male and We've kind of an ageing workforce. So, I would say I'm back maybe to the wellbeing initiatives....I mean, if anything, I would only recently possibly talk about the I suppose the menopause side of things we would have probably an aging workforce. And it's probably something that's not spoken about at the company.”

Participants have conceded that HWB is an issue that should include all employees. However, there is also an understanding that women are different and this difference has to be acknowledged by employers. Stigma around issues relating to women's health is an added pressure on women's HWB.

4.8.2 Diversity training for managers and workforce

The topic of providing diversity training for managers and workforce arose throughout the interviews. While some participants mentioned it early on during the conversations, it became more persistent as the interviews progressed.

Only WP12 and WP3 reported that their organisations were providing diversity training for their managers. WP12 also shared that employees avail of personalised management where honest discussions were held.

Some participants acknowledged that given the high percentage of men managers and team leaders, it would be beneficial for them to learn how to have conversations with their female colleagues. Regarding women's HWB initiatives several participants have expressed their thoughts about the need for managers to avail of diversity training on sensitive issues.

WP3 “How supported women feel by their company tends to be down to how skilled their manager is at managing women and you know, understanding, you know, the various challenges around, you know, the personal life of a woman”.

Participant WP8 thinks that providing diversity training to managers might lead to employees feeling more comfortable to raise their concerns or making requests for time off.

Interviewees have raised the issue of providing diversity training to employees. Even participants that view their organisations as inclusive and supportive believe that their organisations should provide diversity training. However, participants emphasis was for managers to be trained to better understand and accept differences. This is in line with Ewoh's (2013) research that a challenge faced by managers is developing necessary skills to manage a diverse workforce.

4.8.3 Role model and mentoring

Although this question was not asked, many participants expressed their thoughts that women would greatly benefit from meeting or hearing from successful women in their organisations. While some participants acknowledged having CP policies in place, they acknowledged that it was not clear how they could achieve their goals. WP6 suggested to make *"female talent more visible in the organisation"*. WP3 gave an example of what her organisation could do:

WP3 "And, you know, women in leadership positions as well. And to be able to hear about how they, you know, manage the work life balance for example. And you know what their career path was, their journey and you know, the various things that motivate them, you know, their thoughts on you know. Like where we're going and you know, how do we get there as well. So, to be able to have more of that and really kind of like be inspired by other women rather than just seeing their picture and having the odd email from them."

Similarly, WP5 shared some examples of what she would like to learn from women in leadership:

"For example, to have, Umm I don't know events or just a like an online chat with some other women or experts or women that are in a very high position in the company that can express, for example, their point of view, their personal life, their achievements, their struggles and how we can. And I think just how women can what they can do to be respected in the workplace."

WP11 highlights the importance of coaching and mentoring for women. WP9 shared that she would like to see a mentoring program for women by women.

Results indicate that having role models and female mentors is an important factor for the participants. This is in line with Krishnan's (2009) that one of the barriers for women at an individual factor level was absence of a good mentor. The results also concur with Cross and Linehan's (2006) view that lack of mentoring function as a barrier for women's progression.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter uncovered important themes that emerged after examining data gathered through interviews. The development of the themes was led by the research questions and objectives that offered direction on particular issues to explore. We found that the participants intention to stay or leave was due to a cluster of factors. All the interviewees reported having some type of TM practices and RS implemented in their organisations. However, the different initiatives and their implementations varied across the organisations. In next chapter, our findings will be comprehensively analysed. Similarities and differences will be drawn in a broader literature context.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The findings and analysis outlined in Chapter 4 will be discussed in this chapter. The primary objective of the research was to explore the feelings and perspectives of female employees towards the relationship between TM practices and RS and gender equality. Emerging main themes and sub-themes from previous chapter will be discussed with reference to literature.

Results show that two out of thirteen participants said they were leaving. Three participants were staying for at least one year. One participant was staying for at least three years. Two participants were staying for five to six years while five were staying long term. Our result contradicts that of the literature review regarding the high level of turnover intention amongst women. However, it can be argued that this can be attributed to the fact that six participants were only in their organisations between two months to one year. Results also show that the push factor was the motivation behind the two interviewee's turnover intention.

Participants who were staying provided various reasons for their intention to stay. This is consistent with literature that turnover and retention are due to a cluster of factors as opposed to one. This study also found factors of intention to stay to be consistent with Gosh *et al.* (2013) findings.

Consistent with Van Dick *et al.* (2004) findings that individuals come to be psychologically entwined when they greatly identify with their organisations. We found that the sense of belonging and inclusion to be a strong factor impacting six of the participants' intentions to stay.

Interestingly even if participants WP1 and WP4 perceived their organisations as inclusive WP1 stated she was leaving. While WP2 stated she was only going to stay for only a year. This result contributes to better understanding that, even if inclusivity can be considered as a RS, other turnover intention factors must also be considered.

5.2 Discussion objective one

The main emerging theme is underrepresentation to varying degrees at different levels of the organisations. Four participants stated women were represented at every level while seven reported underrepresentation at every level. Concurring with UNCTAD's (2021) report that women's representation has not translated to the managerial level. Findings show that while representation was equal at lower levels this does not reflect at a managerial or higher level.

Interestingly some interviewees raised the issue of role or occupational segregation as a factor impacting on women's representation. Participants attributed underrepresentation to the fact that their organisation was a male-dominated industry or in some cases male-dominated departments. Stamarski and Hing (2015) found that organisational structure represented by "gender-segregated departments and job ladders" and overrepresentation of females in certain roles devalues the status of the roles. Hence, leading to inequalities that are closely linked to inequity in HR practices (p. 6). This was substantiated in WP6 report of the existing large gap between female-dominated support roles and male-dominated management roles due to the grading system. Hence concurring with Cross and Linehan's (2006) observation that organisational rules and processes devised by senior management are transparent barriers.

Another interesting theme that emerged was the perception of lack of fairness, different treatment, and lack of respect. Some participants also shared being belittled by male colleagues. Concurring with Yousaf et al. (2014) observation of male colleagues' devaluing behaviour towards their female counterparts. Some participants reported having experienced or observed instances of inequalities. While some of these instances were evident, others were more subtle. The behaviours were attributed to the existing male culture prevalent in the male-dominated industry or department. However, one participant said that her organisation highly encouraged employees to report discriminatory behaviours.

Our findings support the literature that underrepresentation and inequalities are caused by various factors and are a complex phenomenon (Publicjobs.ie 2022, Bruckmüller and Braun

2020). The results also support Makarem *et al.* (2019) statement that gender inequality pervades the organisational construct hence shaping TM practices.

To summarise our result shows that gender inequality exists at every level of organisations. Gender inequality is found within the organisational structure hence impacting HR practices. Organisational change and leadership support are needed to bring changes.

5.3 Discussion objective two

Result shows that eleven out of thirteen organisations have some type of FW practices in place. Many participants inferred that FW practices were born out of the pandemic. However, they have observed a reduction in FW practices since the lifting of restrictions. All participants emphasised the importance of FW and its benefits on their WLB. This concurs with Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard's (2014) view that WLB is supported and facilitated by FW.

Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard (2014) asserted that trust between employer and worker is a major factor for FW arrangements to work. Trust is a word that came up several times during the interviews. It became evident that trust was a crucial element in determining the extent to which the practices are implemented. Some participants reported that despite having FW policies in place, in practice availing of them was difficult. They attributed the difficulties to rigidity, bureaucracy, and lack of trust. Participants called for cultural change in organisations that would facilitate the implementation of FW practices. Hence concurring with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that hostile organisational culture can impede on FW and WLB implementation.

Concerns were also raised as participants discussed the negative impact that imposed FW has on their WLB and wellbeing. WP11 reported that FW arrangements forcing her to be always available for work was stressful. This was a determining factor in her decision to leave. This finding is supported by McKinsey & Company (2021) report that there is high turnover intention among employees who "feel always on".

Participants called for FW and WLB to be normalised for men. Echoing the literature review about the low uptake of FW by male employees (Publicjobs.ie, 2022; Shagvaliyeva and

Yazdanifard 2014; Cross and Linehan 2006). Participants argue this will enhance equality chances for women as both men and women would be able to share responsibilities equally.

To summarise FW is deemed to be particularly important by participants. FW is a strong factor in the participants decision to stay or leave. Downsides of FW and its impact on HWB and decision to leave were also uncovered. Participants argue that making FW more accessible to men can help reduce gender inequality. However, barriers to successful implementation of FW practices were found to be lack of trust, bureaucracy, rigidity, and organisational culture.

Training and development

Our results found that only one out of twelve participants were not offered T&D. Six participants reported having T&D as both mandatory and for developmental growth. However, only five of them reported having clear career paths and regular conversations with their managers. We also found that these five participants organisations adopt an IA approach hence providing T&D for everyone. As WP13 commented, "our talent can be male or female". These participants reported being highly motivated and strongly associated T&D with career progression. This is in line with Fletcher et al.'s (2018) finding of the strong correlation between T&D, job satisfaction, and intention to stay.

On the other hand, participants who reported that T&D was only to perform their job also revealed they did not have clear career paths conversation with their managers. Some participants reported availing of training that can only be used as support for other teams. Therefore, concurring with Wilkinson and Redman's (2013) argument that some T&D reinforces disadvantages that keep individuals in lower-paid and low-skilled occupations.

Health and Wellbeing

Results show that twelve out of thirteen participants reported having HWB initiatives in their organisations. Participants feel that their organisations are strongly committed to their HWB. Interviewees reported that burnout and well-being are being taken seriously by their organisations. They reported that numerous HWB initiatives were available to

employees. Therefore, contradicting CIPD's (2022b) statement that half of the organisations do not have formal HWB strategies in place. CIPD's (2022a) survey reported a decline in HWB activities. However, none of the participants have noticed changes in the HWB initiatives available in their organisation since the lifting of the pandemic restrictions.

Our findings support the literature review that focusing on women's HWB and addressing burnout has a strong correlation with their intention to stay or resign.

Career and SP

Seven out of thirteen participants mentioned CP as a motivating factor to stay. In line with literature that CP is a factor leading female employees to leave or intent to leave (Deloitte 2022; McKinsey & Company 2021; PwC 2022), one participant cited the lack of CP as a factor leading her to leave. Two participants reported having no CP opportunities. Four participants said they were aware of existing initiatives but it has not been clearly communicated to them. In contrast, five interviewees stated that they have clear CP plans as well as regular meetings with their managers to follow through with their progress. Interestingly, they also commented that the onus was on them to put their names forward for promotion.

WP10 reported that now that she has small children stability was more important than CP. Therefore, asserting with Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) that predominant issues become parameters in women's career decision making. Regarding SP only three participants were aware of the SP processes in their organisations. Hence contradicting CIPD's (2020) argument about enhanced transparency of SP.

Managerial support

Throughout the interviews, participants have emphasised the importance of having managerial support. They highlighted the significance of having their managers' support as paramount to the various aspects of their professional lives. Yousaf et al. (2014) stated that women were not given the same consideration as men. In contradiction, all the participants

reported having a good relationship with their managers and availing of their support. However, we have to be cognizant of the different contextual factor of Yousaf et al.'s study.

Our research also found that managers were responsible and had a huge influence on the implementation of different TM practices. Therefore, managerial support is seen as being closely related to the successful implementation of TM and RS practices.

5.5 Discussion objective three

An interesting theme that emerged is that all the organisations had gender blind policies. Throughout the interviews the lack of policies targeting women became apparent. When talking about the different TM and RS in their organisations participants unanimously reported that all the policies and practices were for both men and women. Hence assenting with statements by Makarem et al. (2019) and Amaral and Jaller (2020) that gender policies are blind. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (2022), gender-blind policies sustain the status quo and do not help change the unbalanced gender relation structure.

However, our study also found that participants that perceived their organisations to be fair and inclusive viewed the TM and RS policies as gender neutral. They believe that their organisation was providing for all employees' needs equally and that they were not being discriminated against. Similarly, Stamarski and Hing (2015) found that employees do not feel prejudiced when "they perceive that diverse groups are included, empowered, and treated fairly"(p. 7).

There were calls from participants for organisations to expand scopes to enhance females' progression regardless of the industry, role, or position. WP2 said because "we're moving in a system that wasn't designed for us" it was difficult for women to get promoted. Participants described their organisations as having a "grandfather system"WP10, or "things being done the old way" WP6, as an explanation for women's exclusion. Our study also revealed that in line with Krishnan (2009), women were excluded from the 'old boy network' hence impacting on their progressions.

Asserting with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that female's career was relational, WP6 observed that due to caring responsibilities, not all women were ambitious and looking for promotion. This view is also shared by WP10. However, participants believe that nonetheless, opportunities should be available for women willing to progress.

Overall, we found that all organisations had gender blind policies. However, they were not perceived to be discriminatory by participants in organisation that had an IA. Limited scope for progression, structural and cultural barriers were also factors found to be impacting on women's development hence leading to under representation.

5.6 Discussion objective four

Participants believe that organisations must acknowledge the difference between men and women. They commented on the need to have initiatives targeting women. Participants called for a gender-sensitive approach to women's HWB. There was an awareness by some participants that men should not be discriminated against. However, there was also the understanding that men were not impacted by issues such as period pain and menopause.

According to themenopausehub (2021) survey, 77% of women reported being impacted by menopause symptoms, 22% of which missed 3+ working days, 85% did not feel they could disclose the reason for their absence, 43% considered leaving their work, and 97% called for managers and HR to get trained on the issue as well as having a policy in place. Participants are aware of the stigma attached to these issues. However, there was also an increased awareness due to ageing workforce and the importance of HWB.

This finding is quite significant for organisations particularly for MNCs that tend to employ women. It can have substantial impact such as turnover; infringement of health and safety requirements; propensity for complaint in relation to discrimination.

Another theme that emerged throughout the interviews was the need to provide diversity training for managers and the workforce. However, only two participants stated that diversity training was offered in their organisations. Ewoh (2013) found that given the challenge of managing a diverse and complex workforce, it was vital for managers to gain essential skills in order to improve communication and interpersonal skills. Our

interviewees also agree that providing diversity training to managers might lead to female employees and managers alike feeling more comfortable particularly when having conversations regarding sensitive issues.

While it was not specifically asked, our interviewees expressed the importance of having role models and mentors. Warrell (2020) contends that due to gender inequality, “institutional barriers and negative stereotypes” role models have an increased benefit for women. Our findings also revealed that the participants believe they would benefit from hearing about the experience of successful women in their organisations. They think that it would be inspiring to learn about the role model’s achievements, struggles as well as failures to help them navigate through their own career journey. Benson’s (2022) research shows that 36% of women surveyed said role models boost their confidence and influenced their decision-making. Participants also expressed that it would be beneficial to have women mentors. However, Stamarski and Hing (2015) state that there was a lack of role models or mentors due to the dearth of women in leadership roles.

5.7 Limitation

This dissertation had limitations as with any other studies. The research was restricted to only women working in MNCs. This sample can be considered to be homogeneous as only women were involved. However, the sample itself was varied as the participants are from different industries, various age group, different years of experience and at a different stage in their careers.

Another limitation is the restricted number of RS factors that were studied. They are relevant for current macro and micro economic and societal factors. However, given the current volatile environment as well as considering contextual aspects other RS factors might become more prevalent.

By adopting a qualitative approach, we were able to get deep insight into how TM and RS was perceived by the participants. However, a mixed methods approach to this study combining qualitative and quantitative would have provided numerical data and add more breadth to our understanding.

5.8 Conclusion

The findings indicate that most participants intend to stay in their organisations. It is clear that underrepresentation exists at different levels of the organisation to varying degrees. Most organisations have different TM practices and RS strategies. We also found that managers have a big role to play in the implementation of the strategies. Downsides of some strategies leading to negative consequences were also found. However, it is clear that lack of trust, the culture and structure of the organisation dictates how these strategies are devised and implemented.

The next chapter is the last one that will look at the conclusions, recommendations, implications of findings, area for future research and personal learning statement.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The main aim of this study was to explore women's feelings and perspectives in relation to the relationship between TM practices and RS and gender equality in an Irish context. In doing so we attempted to understand its impact on talent shortages and women's representation in the workplace. Our study was focused on MNCs for three reasons, they tend to employ women, they have embraced TM strategies and Ireland is a country that is mostly reliant on MNCs.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen women employed in foreign owned MNCs in Ireland. Participants were asked open ended questions devised by the researcher inquiring about TM practices and RS that organisations have implemented to support women. Consistent with the literature reviewed, we also found that gender inequalities permeate through organisational structures hence impacting on TM and RS policies and practices. An example of which is the controversial debate about IA and EA. The findings indicate that compared to the literature review, turnover intention was low amongst our participants.

CIPD (2021d) survey found that only a few companies have RS in place. Contrarily our study found that most organisations have implemented different TM practices and RS. We also found that all the organisation's TM policies were gender blind. However, we found that the organisations have differing TM and RS practices. The extent to which the policies were being used in practice, within and amongst organisations varied. We argue that organisational structure and culture are major factors impacting on the implementations. We also argue that the role played by managers in the implementation of the strategies is a contributing factor.

It was found that some strategies have downsides that contribute to inequality. However, it is clear that lack of trust, the culture and structure of the organisation determine how these strategies are devised and implemented. Hence acting as major contributors to inequality.

In line with literature and our study's findings, gender inequality is a complex phenomenon that is caused by various factors. Therefore, we argue that various factors need various

solutions as a one size fit all will not work. Our study's model contributes to a better understanding of how TM practices and RS strategies influence gender inequality. Our study lays the foundation for further research into the impact of TM and RS on gender equality.

6.2 Future research

An interesting effect of this study is that it has contributed to the ongoing debate about the under explored issue of TM and gender. We have endeavoured to answer Makarem *et al.* (2019) call to expand the TM literature by including HR policy issues linked with gender inequality. Our research has revealed that TM, RS and gender inequality are intrinsically linked however, it has also few implications for future research.

Future research can consider a heterogeneous sample to add to our understanding of how both men and women perceive the impact of TM and RS on gender inequality issue. Both male and female can be included to get the broadest range of perspectives. Findings can be used to compare similarities or differences in the outcomes.

Future research can include mix methods research including qualitative and quantitative methods. While this can be labour intensive and provide differing results, it provides more flexibility and depth. Further studies are needed to explore different TM and RS and their impact on gender equality in both foreign owned MNCs and Irish owned organisations. Findings could be valuable additions to understanding the perception of women from these different settings.

6.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been established. They derive from our findings and observations gathered throughout this study.

(i) Diversity training for the workforce

Provide diversity training to the workforce to increase awareness and equip employees with necessary skills to understand gender inequality. However, due to the nature of their interactions with employees, managers should be prioritised as they play a major role in the organisation. As you have noticed we mentioned ‘workforce’ and not male or female employees. Providing training to all the employees will send a strong message from leadership that the organisation has embraced inclusion and diversity.

(ii) Devise gender sensitive policies to cater for women

An example can be a policy related to women’s HWB mainly around issues of menopause and period pain. Having a policy in place can send a message that employees are valued and cared for. Therefore, enhancing motivation and engagement however, it will also protect the organisation from potential litigation. Under the health and safety regulations, organisations have a duty of care to employees. Equality laws can also be in breach of if employees are not offered needed support.

(iii) Role models and mentoring

Being able to relate to a female role model has been firmly expressed by our participants. However, it does not have to be someone external to the organisation. Organisations with women at higher level, or a female who is admired and has inspired others can share their experiences. Research has shown that role models can positively impact a person. While female mentors might not be available in organisations due to under representation, male mentors can also be as effective. Again, diversity training can also help in that sense.

(iv) Informal flexible working

Our participants have reported availing of formal FW practices and some also of informal FW. We suggest that organisations consider the role of informal FW whenever possible. However, we also acknowledge that it might give rise to issues like favouritism. However,

we argue that it might encourage more male to avail of informal FW arrangements as it will not be seen to negatively impact on their career. However, it must be consistently and fairly applied to mitigate negative effect .

(v) Enhance communication

Organisations can have excellent HR policies but if they are not clearly communicated to employees they might not work as effectively. Multiple communication channels must be used to divulge information. Regular communication between managers and their team members can build trust and rapport and enhance collaboration and engagement.

6.4 Implications of findings

Talent shortages is a significant issue for organisations that is affecting business growth. While harnessing the untapped female pool to win the talent war organisations must proactively identify factors to retain them. This research makes few contributions to the limited knowledge on TM and gender. Areas have been identified that organisations can consider while devising, implementing, or altering TM and RS strategies.

However, it is important for organisations to be cognizant of the impact of the financial costs associated with the implementation of above recommendations. However, since cost associated with turnover is quite high, implementing above recommendations will be profitable overall. We argue that not all the recommendations have high cost associated for example, communication, role model/mentoring, informal FW, but can nevertheless be greatly beneficial for the organisations. Regarding a timeline, it will depend on what the organisations already have in place. An internal assessment of the policies and procedures and cost associated with implementations can be conducted by individual organisations.

6.5 Personal Learning Statement

The entire journey from the first lecture to the completion of the dissertation was extremely rewarding. Doing this Master is a significant personal achievement. Having some

experience in the Human resource field already finishing this study has allowed me to acquire more knowledge and skills that will be beneficial for my career.

The chosen research topic is one that I am passionate about and is currently relevant. The main challenge encountered while doing the dissertation was doing a topic that was under researched. It was quite a big topic to investigate and remaining on track was challenging. Doing a qualitative investigation and learning from the amazing participant's experience, expertise and perspectives was a rich experience that allowed me to understand the topic from different angles. It was overall a rewarding experience.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Dissertation Title: *What are the thoughts and perspectives of female employees within multinational corporations in Ireland on how talent management and retention strategies influence gender equality?*

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

Who am I and what is the study about?

My name is Jennifer Alcindor, and I am a full-time student in National College of Ireland. I am completing a Master's in Human Resource Management. This course requires the completion of a research project to be submitted as a dissertation on the 17th of August 2022.

As part of this study, I will be conducting a qualitative study to investigate the impact of talent management and retention strategies on the retention of women in multinationals and how this influence gender inequality.

What will taking part involve?

Should you decide to volunteer, you will be invited to participate in one interview of approximately 30 to 45 minutes. You will be asked some questions about talent management practices, career development, existing support, health, and wellbeing, motivating factors to stay or leave and existing retention strategies.

The interview will be conducted via Microsoft Teams and will be audio recorded. Information provided as part of the study will in accordance with the National College of Ireland Ethics

Committee requirement be kept strictly confidential. Prior to the interview you will be asked to signify your agreement by signing the consent form.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been selected to take part in this research because you are a woman working in a multinational within Ireland.

Do you have to take part?

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct benefits to you for contributing to the research. However, your participation will help to contribute to our understanding of the topic being studied. It is not anticipated that you will come under any possible physical or psychological harm as a result of participating in the research.

Will taking part be confidential?

Any information gathered during the interview will be kept confidential. Your identity, that of your organisation or any individuals you might talk about will be removed from the transcripts and the written dissertation. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the names of the participants and organisations will be disguised as well as any other identifying factors that may arise during the interview. Quotes may be included in the findings and analysis section of the dissertation. However, they will exclude any identifying information.

The situations in which the researcher may have to break confidentiality: if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed.

Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings collected will be retained as part of the research process.

How will information you provided be recorded, stored, and protected?

The interview will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy and ease of transcription. An interview transcript can be provided upon request. Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a password protected file on the researcher's laptop until after the degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time

What will happen to the results of the study?

As part of my master's degree to the National College of Ireland, the results of this study will only be submitted in my dissertation.

Who should you contact for further information?

You are free to contact any of the people involved in the research, that is, the primary researcher **Jennifer Alcindor** at x21106029@student.ncirl.ie.

You can also contact the dissertation supervisor **Dr. David Mothersill** at david.mothersill@ncirl.ie to seek further clarification and information.

Thank you.

Appendix 2 -Consent Form

Title of project

What are the thoughts and perspectives of female employees within multinational corporations in Ireland on how talent management and retention strategies influence gender equality?

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 participation involves an interview that will be carried out via Teams.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in this particular dissertation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on a laptop only accessible by the researcher until the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board confirmation of the dissertation's results.
- 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, that is, the researcher **Jennifer Alcindor** and/or the dissertation supervisor **Dr. David Mothersill** 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 3 - Finalised Interview Questions

Questions

1. How long have you been working for your current organisation?
2. What is your current role?
3. What are your thoughts about staying or leaving the organisation?
 - 3.1 **If staying** - What are the important factors that motivates you to stay with your current employer
 - (a) How long do you think you will stay in your current organisation?
 - (b) What would appeal to you in a different organisation?
 - 3.2 **If leaving** – What are the main factors that have motivated, you to leave the organisation
 - (a) what are the factors that you find important that will attract you/or have attracted you to the new position?
 - (b) What can your current organisation do to prevent you from leaving?
4. How to do think women are supported in the organisation
5. What role do you think your supervisor/line manager plays in supporting you?
6. I would like to ask you about specific TM practices to see how you feel your organisation is using them to retain female employees.
 - (a) What are your thoughts about the flexible work practices and work life balance initiatives that your organisation use? (Work from home/hybrid/remote)
 - (b) What do you think about the training and development initiatives that your organisation make use of?
 - (c) What do you think about the career or succession planning initiative as way of retaining female employees that your organisation has implemented?
 - (d) What do you think about the health and wellbeing initiatives that your organisation has provided/is providing for female employees?
7. What do you feel your organisation can do in terms of TM and RS to provide more opportunities for women?
8. What do you think your organisation can do to retain women?
9. What do you think are the key gender issues that exist at different level of your organisation?