Senior Female Managers in the Irish Hospitality Industry based in Dublin: the barriers and challenges encountered with career progression and how they can be overcome.

Submitted by Clíona Giblin

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MA in Human Resource Management.

Presented to the National College of Ireland.

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Abstract:

This research sets out to analyses and understand what barriers and challenges are faced by senior female managers in the Irish hospitality industry with their career progression, primarily focusing on the hospitality sector in Dublin and how these barriers might be overcome. The research is set out to primarily undercover what the main barriers are for senior female managers and recommendations have been put forward to help improve these challenges in the future. To understand and examine the continuous threads as to why female managers are faced with these barriers and challenges in the hospitality sector in Dublin, following research on secondary data, this research undertook a qualitative method approach by conducting semi-structed interviews. The semi-structured interviews were accomplished with six senior female mangers within one of Irelands biggest hotel chains and were interviewed across three of their hotel properties. The purpose of conducting these interviews is to understand what the common factor or themes are that occurs regarding the barriers that they face in their career progression as being a woman in the Irish hospitality industry. The researcher discovered from conducting the interviews compared to that of the secondary data, that self-imposed barriers were the most common theme with each participant. A thematic analysis approach was taken to analyse the qualitative data from the data collected of the semi-structured interviews which allowed for common threads and themes to be identified. From conducting both primary and secondary research, the researcher hopes from its findings that recommendations can be put forward to help senior female managers overcome these barriers and the stages of improvement that the sector can put into action which included that of mentorship programmes.

Key Words: Irish Hospitality Industry, Senior female managers, barriers, challenges, career progression, mentorship and leadership.

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AI Acknowledgment

This section acknowledges the AI tools that were utilized in the process of completing this assignment.

Tool Name	Brief Description	Link to tool
Microsoft Teams	Microsoft teams was used to record and transcribe the research instrument.	My Account (microsoft.com)

Description of AI Usage

This section provides a more detailed description of how the AI tools were used in the assignment. It includes information about the prompts given to the AI tool, the responses received, and how these responses were utilized or modified in the assignment.

Microsoft Teams	
Microsoft Teams was used to record and transcribe semi-structured interviews. The researcher then further transcribed the research gathered.	

Evidence of AI Usage

This section includes evidence of significant prompts and responses used or generated through the AI tool. It should provide a clear understanding of the extent to which the AI tool was used in the assignment. Evidence may be attached via screenshots or text.

Additional Evidence:

Given the confidentiality of research gathered and anonymity or participants, the researcher will not be including a screenshot of the transcribed interview.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to give my sincere thanks to my supervisor Dr. Maurice FitzGerald for helping me through this journey of writing the thesis paper. For the constant guidance and support over the last few months with words of encouragement and for having the belief in me to write this thesis when it is something that I have lacked throughout. I am very grateful to of had him as my supervisor.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this research paper is to establish what barriers and challenges are faced by senior female managers within the Irish hospitality industry primarily within Dublin in terms of career progression and to understand how these barriers may be overcome. Following this research study, the researcher has developed an understanding of the main themes and challenges that are faced by senior female managers in the Irish hospitality industry in today's working world. As there is a significant gap in literature available related to the Irish hospitality industry and the progression of its female managers, with the help of primary and secondary data including that of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher can put forward an argument as to why this research is worthy of a study.

The first section of this research paper begins to give an overview and introduction of the research topic of choice. This chapter introduces the Irish hospitality industry and that of females within the industry. A list of working definitions and a justification for the research question are included within this chapter.

1.2: Irish Hospitality Background:

The Irish hospitality industry has a rolling total of over 1,600 hotel businesses and an average of 36 different hotel groups. These hotel groups have different hotel chains and businesses operating within Ireland (IBIS World, 2023). Within Ireland, the biggest hotel groups are measured by the average total of rooms in each individual property. Dalata Hotel Group PLC is the largest operator of hotels in Ireland with two of their main hotels being Maldron and Clayton. The hotel group has an average of 7,000 rooms available throughout their different hotels in Ireland (Dalata, 2024).

Outside of Ireland, the biggest hotel chain worldwide is that of Marriott International. The hotel chain has 30 leading brands within the group which contributes to 8,000 properties spanning across 140 countries (Marriott International, 2024). Within Ireland, Marriot Bonvoy is the leading brand of Marriott that has 7 hotels in their collection. Some of the hotels include Powerscourt Hotel and The Shelbourne (Marriott, 2024).

The Irish hospitality industry plays a pivotal role within the Irish economy. As the Covid-19 pandemic had a crucially negative effect on the Irish hospitality industry, with now grossing a market size of nearly 4.1bn euro in revenue and providing over 58,000 jobs (IBIS World, 2023) in the industry as of 2024, it is one of the top performing sectors within the Irish economy. Since 2022 the Irish accommodation and food sector has seen an average increase of 8.3

thousand in the number of those employed within the industry compared to that of 2022 (CSO, 2023).

As the industry has had an incline in its growth since the pandemic with individual room rates and occupancy being filled, the hospitality industry in Ireland still faces many challenges with staff shortages, energy consumption and the increase in the VAT rate (Cushman & Wakefield, 2023). A recent strategic research and insight report by Failte Ireland also found how the decrease in demand within the Irish hospitality industry is a combination of factors including that of a spike in prices being charged and a change to consumer disposable income (Failte Ireland, 2024).

1.3: Females in the Hospitality Industry:

The hospitality and travel industry worldwide has been seen and continues to be seen as a male dominated industry with females primarily undertaking undermining roles and positions within the industry compared to that of their male colleagues (Croissy, 2022).

Throughout the hospitality industry, in recent years there has been a growth towards the number of females who have accounted for the overall large population of the sector (Liu *et al.,* 2021). With there being shown to be an increase with the representation of females in senior management positions and roles in the hospitality industry, there is still a significant lack of representation in top management positions (Liu *et al*., 2021). As distinguished in the report from Women in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Tourism (2020) it is noted how the overall leadership roles accounted for by women are just that of 25%. The report also indicates that women in the hospitality sector only account for 28% of the overall total of the hotel boards committee.

A study that has been developed by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) discovered how even though women represent up to 54% of the travel and tourism employment sector worldwide, there is still a big gap for women that are not in senior managerial positions within the industry (WTTO, 2021). With reports conducted by the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) identifying that since 2019, women in the hospitality workforce make up 51% of the hospitality industry (BLS, 2021), there are arguments made by The Castell Project who discuss that although there is an increase in women working in hospitality, there are only 30% of females in senior positions within the industry (Castell, 2019). SOLAS conducted a study in conjunction with the CSO which evaluated how only 45% of females in the industry were that of hospitality managers. Under half of those compared to males within the industry (SOLAS,

2024). With the lack of female managers represented within the Irish hospitality sector, it puts an argument forward for the researcher to analysis and understand what factors may be preventing more females from achieving these senior positions in the Irish hospitality sector.

As investigated by Deiana and Fabbri (2020) they elaborate on how the progression of females in the hospitality industry is continuously seen as more challenging for those females who want to reach senior level positions. They intimated from their research how the ongoing themes of mentorship, male power (glass ceiling) and societal factors play a role in the career progression of female managers within the hospitality industry.

The main aim of this research study is to gather an understanding of what barriers and challenges are faced by senior female managers in the hospitality industry in Dublin when progressing in their career and to understand reasons as to how they may be overcome. This research study is set out to identify the barriers and implement ways to help break down the barriers for senior female managers to progress in their careers.

1.4: Working Definitions of Main Themes:

Throughout this research and piece of literature there will be a continuous display of themes and working terms that will be used throughout the paper. To help the reader understand each of the common threads and themes the researcher has outlined the definitions of the main themes and working terms.

1.4.1: The Irish Hospitality Industry:

The Irish hospitality industry as mentioned during the background of this study is a key constituent of the Irish economy which contributes an estimation of 4bn Euro annually in revenue to the Irish economy. The hospitality industry is commonly distinguished as a people focused, labour intensified service industry which relies on their frontline employees to deliver the hotels success (Frye, W.D *et al.,* 2020).

1.4.2: Senior Managers and Junior Managers:

There are a variety of different ways that senior managers can be defined as, but they are managers who have the main responsibility to implement policies and procedures as well as setting about change in an organisation. In conjunction to that of senior managers, junior managers take responsibility to manage operational strategies as well as having pivotal roles of supervisory duties (Funke *et al.,* 2023).

1.4.3: Barriers and Challenges:

As this research paper is primarily based upon the barriers and challengers faced by senior female managers in the Irish hospitality industry, an understanding needs to be drawn upon the terms of a barrier and a challenge. As the researcher develops upon this research paper, barriers are the significant roadblocks that occur for female managers with their career growth (O'Connell & McKinnon, 2021). Like barriers, challenges are the implemented issues that may emerge in terms of career progression (Kulcsár, Dobrean and Gati, 2020).

1.4.4: Career Progression:

There are many ways that career progression can be defined and implanted. As explained by Weng and Zhu (2020), career progression is the growth that an individual makes in their career across an organisation. It involves the steps they take to achieve higher positions within their career.

1.4.5: Leadership and Mentorship:

Throughout this research study, the leadership and mentorship of female managers in the Dublin hospitality industry will be repeated several times. As noted by Northouse (2018), he illustrates how there is more than one type of leader and more than one definition of what leadership may be. In a corporate world, leadership is seen by those individuals that bring special value and help to improve company goals (Northouse, 2018).

Like that of leadership, mentorship differs in context depending on the culture (Zachary and Fain, 2022). Ivey and Dupré (2020) characterize mentorship in the workplace as having a senior person who guides and takes interest in a junior person within the workforce. They show a level of expertise that helps guide their junior colleagues with their career progression.

1.5: Thesis Structure

This section will breakdown and outline the structure of the thesis paper.

1.5.1: Introduction

As stated at the start of this chapter, it introduces the hospitality industry and the main topic of question. Reasons for conducting this study are also included.

1.5.2: Literature Review

This chapters forms a critical analysis on the barriers and challenges that females at a senior managerial level are faced with when progression in their careers focusing on the Irish

hospitality sector. The review of academic literature is examined to help the researcher compare while also justifying their reason for study.

1.5.3: Research Question

This chapter introduces the research question developed upon this study. The researcher outlines the research sub-questions and objectives for the study by including how these will be developed.

1.5.4: Research Methodology

This chapter looks at and discusses the methodology used for the purpose of this study. The different methods of analysis used for this thesis paper are also acknowledged including that of the research philosophy, data collection methods and pilot study. The reason for using this methodology will also be justified.

1.5.5: Findings and Analysis

Within this chapter, it focuses on presenting the findings gathered from the primary data of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted. The researcher discovered from the interviews that there are no primary workplace barriers that still affect women's career progression but that of their own. Suggestions of recommendation were also made on how to help women in leadership roles overcome these personal barriers.

1.5.6: Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the main finding in more detail. New findings from conducting the research instrument are also discussed within this chapter which are that of self-imposed barriers. Future recommendations including that of costing and timelines are also discussed within this chapter.

1.5.7: Conclusion

This chapter brings together the main conclusion of the research that was gathered throughout this study. Future academic research approaches are also noted within this chapter. This chapter concludes with the personal learning statement.

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical analysis on the existing relevant literature that implement what the main concepts of barriers and challenges are that female managers face in the hospitality industry within their career progression. The researcher aims to link and analyse the existing literature to that of their research question, focusing on the hospitality industry within Dublin.

This chapter will focus on the main challenges and barriers that are significant throughout all aspects of literature that the researcher has analysed throughout this study. By examining these common themes, the researcher sets out to develop strategies which can help break these barriers in the Irish hospitality industry within Dublin. The critical analysis of these academic sources will also help to gather information that can contribute to the study of the researcher's question, which is outlined as *'What barriers and challenges are faced by senior female managers and how might they be overcome?'*.

With the researcher focusing on the main barriers and challenges within the workforce that women in leadership positions may encounter within the hospitality industry, literature will also be drawn upon in this thesis to develop and understand if there are any external factors that contribute to the barriers of career progression for women in leadership positions within the industry.

2.2: Women in Hospitality:

The global hospitality industry has a reputation for being gender segregated and having a low level of female managers at the top of the chain (Calinaud, Kokkranikal and Gebbles, 2021). It is highly over gender segregated with males dominating the field and the boardrooms with the gender wage gap being a significant issue between men and women (Morgan and Pritchard, 2019).

In comparison to this, Ali, Grabarski and Konrad (2022) from a study regarding the top-down and bottom-up dynamics of women within the hospitality and tourism industry discovered from research that although these dynamics can be attractive to women to apply for leadership roles, they still encounter challenges and disadvantages to that of their male colleagues.

As examined earlier, women account for 54% of those employed within the tourism and hospitality employment industry on a global scale (WTTO, 2021). Although women account for over half of the employment rate within the hospitality and tourism sector globally, there is

still shown to be a significant gap in the percentage of those women who hold senior or junior managerial positions within the hospitality sector.

According to Forbes (2023) women leaders only make up 30% of the sector and with this, for every individual female chief officer within an organisation, there are three males that occur the same title. It is noted by HospitalityNet (2019) that there is becoming a more balance within the hospitality industry regarding the gender of male and female leaders in managerial roles with women applying more frequently for leadership positions. Despite the growing changes, the hospitality industry is still a centred focus when it comes to males and females within leadership positions (Cornell University, 2018). Within Ireland alone, as previously mentioned, 45% of female managers account for the total percentage of managers within the industry (SOLAS, 2024). This significantly shows that there is a lack of female managers in leadership positions within the industry.

2.3: Barriers and challenges for senior female managers within the Irish hospitality industry.

With ongoing improvements being made to the increase of females in senior managerial positions in the hospitality industry, there is a continuous number of barriers that they are faced with when progressing in their careers.

A conducted study by Fathy and Youssif (2020) outlined and identified several types of barriers that females are faced with in senior positions which include societal barriers, environmental barriers, and internal barriers. Peshave and Gupta (2017) from a conducted study indicated how some of the main barriers that females encounter during their career progression include the challenges of the glass ceiling, geographical mobility, mentoring and gender labour segregation. In conjunction to this, Zinyemba (2013) note from conducting qualitative research that women in the hospitality industry are faced with challenges due to culture and breaking through the glass ceiling.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the researcher sets out to analyse the continuous themes of barriers and challenges that are faced by female managers in the hospitality industry by comparing the literature with one another by referencing back to the research question.

2.3.1: Glass Ceiling

Research gathered by Mohamed, Elsaid, and Ela (2023) notified that the concept of the glass ceiling is perturbed with traditions which neglect women from achieving senior management positions. From a descriptive conducted study, Martinez-Fierro and Sancho (2021) identified that the glass ceiling epitomizes the hidden barriers that women in managerial positions are faced with when progressing in their careers. In recent times, women have accomplished senior management and middle management positions but there is still a lack of women who are being recruited for top management positions (International Labour Organization, 2015).

Regarding the glass ceiling and arguments against it, many studies and data analyses have been conducted. Mwashita, Zungu and Abrahams (2020) instrumented from their studies that the glass ceiling is evident for women in the hospitality industry and found that the glass ceiling is an overall barrier affecting women in the industry with their career progression. From a two-way structural equation analysis that was conducted by Babic and Hansez (2021), it is argued that a perception of the glass ceiling is evident in interpersonal, situational, and organisational issues.

With this, an in dept research study by Kumara (2018) on the hotel and hospitality industry formed a synopsis on how the glass ceiling is a main barrier for women when progressing with their career development. The author also stated from their research how it has been widely identified that women in the hospitality sector occupy lower positions of hierarchy to that of their male colleagues.

A research study that was conducted by Taparia and Lenka (2022) evaluated how the glass ceiling is an unattainable barrier which neglects women from progressing up the corporate ladder, they identify that it: keeps women and minorities from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements (p.373).Dauti and Dauti (2020) illustrated from studies how the glass ceiling effects women in managerial positions growth is that although they have qualifications, they still find it to be challenging on reaching the highest level of management. In affiliation with this, Bazazo *et al.,* (2017) describes how although female managers portray the same qualifications as their male colleagues, they lack promotions as the glass ceiling illustrates as a hidden barrier. It was noted by Pastore, Webster and Hope (2020) how women in the travel and hospitality industry must be more skilled and qualified than their male colleagues to help with their career progression as the hidden effects of the glass ceiling contribute to this.

Peshave and Gupta (2017) argue in conjunction from their research evaluations, that although women in management are seen to be moving up the management ladder, they still encounter challenges in relation to the glass ceiling when achieving these positions. Their research entails that woman in hospitality still face challenges regarding their career growth. The glass ceiling is very much evident within the hospitality industry and towards women in senior managerial positions. In their research studies, Masadeh and Alhammad (2020) notify that although women show a focus and productiveness towards their work, they still face a lack of support towards their career development.

Although there has been many research and literature that outline the glass ceiling as being one significant barrier that is faced by female managers in the hospitality industry, Boone *et al.* (2013) have made arguments against this. They have argued from their research that the challenges women face in their career progression in the hospitality industry is that of their own self-imposed barriers. They also argue on how these barriers are developed by the lack of leadership and mentorship available for women when starting in their careers within the industry. From a research study of hypothesis undertaken by Tinuke (2018) they discovered that the glass ceiling hinders the progression of women in terms of their career development but also outlines that organizational and personal dynamics influence their career advancement which in turn results to having a negative effective on their career progression.

It has been evident throughout research that the glass ceiling is a key barrier that women in senior managerial positions are faced with when progressing in their careers but there are also organizational and cultural dynamics that play a part in hindering their progression within the industry.

2.3.2: Mentoring

Mentoring is a popular initiative that is implemented into many aspects of life but primarily in the workplace. With referencing to mentorship earlier in this thesis, Ivey and Dupré (2022) acknowledge how mentorship is used and described in the workforce by a senior leader helping and encouraging a new employee at the start of their career. As distinguished by House *et al.* (2021) mentoring is used within different organisations to help career progressing but to also help with retention in the workplace by minimising gender inequalities. Liu *et al*. (2024) argue on the importance of mentorship within the workplace as it provides employees with technical and psychological support. They also acknowledge that having mentorship enhances workplace performance and helps with the wellbeing of employees.

Feng Uen *et al.* (2018) from research studies, elaborate on how mentorship and mentoring within the hospitality industry can help motivate and reach employees expectations by guiding them in the workplace. Dashper (2020) illustrated how mentoring is used in hospitality to help with the onboarding process of employees into the organisation's culture but there is a lack of focus and attention when it comes to developing female leaders within the industry. In conjunction with this, Caliunad, *et al.* (2020) identified how one of the main barriers for female progression in the hospitality industry is that of mentoring. They argue on how the lack of mentoring for women has decreased and shown an insufficiency in their career growth compared to those men within the hospitality sector. As identified by Hughes and Sheerin (2016) they discuss how female mentors provide a significant benefit to other females when looking at their own career progression.

As there are many arguments against the lack of mentoring for women in managerial positions in the hospitality industry, research has been conducted on the positive effect that the implementation of mentoring programmes can have on career growth for women in their working profession within the hospitality industry. With this, Kestwal (2017) identifies how having mentorship programmes for women in the hospitality industry can help motivate them for the future with planning their career growth. The author also discusses how seeing senior females in higher positions within the industry can motivate those female employees with their careers. This argument links back to that of the research question and helps to identify a recommendation of the importance of mentorship programmes for women within the industry.

Scerri, Presbury, and Goh (2020) collected data from conducting 48 interviews from people working within the hospitality industry. Their findings gathered that having mentoring programmes withing the industry will help encourage confidence, build networking expertise while also increasing skills and knowledge. In comparison to this, Read, Fisher, and Juran (2020) investigated from their data collection of 39 interviews, that women in leadership positions are actively seeking a growth in their careers. The data collection identified how a minority of women agreed to a lack of mentoring support whereas the majority admitted to not seeking out the help of mentorship as it was unknown to them.

There is a significant lack of mentorship for women in the hospitality industry that has been evident through research. This has also been shown through research conducted on the investment banking industry. From a data collection of interviews that were conducted with 11

female managers from Investment Management, Hughes, and Sheerin (2016) found that most females prefer male mentors but agreed on the importance to having senior female managers in these positions to set the standard for other women within the industry. Arguments have been put against the need for female mentors compared to male mentors.

Ponting *et al.* (2023) identified from research that women do not seem to have a gender preference when it comes to mentors but for women in the hospitality industry, female mentors are preferred. With studies of research also conducted by Russen, Dawson, and Madera (2021) they indicated how the lack of female mentors within the tourism and hospitality industries leads for there to be barriers that effect women in senior management positions.

From the above research, it is critical to develop reasons as to what mentorship female managers have encountered in the hospitality industry when progressing in their careers. It also sets out to discover if any mentorship programmes are available to them.

2.3.3: Leadership

Leadership as describes at the beginning of this thesis paper has more than one meaning with different types of leadership. In a workplace environment, leaders are seen as those who uphold special characteristics in helping achieve company's values and targets (Northouse, 2018).

Regarding leadership for women in the corporate world, Srivastava and Nalawade (2023) note how women encounter a lack of training and education which hinders them from having the abilities to develop the skills of a leader and achieve leadership positions in comparison to that of male colleagues who are open to better opportunities. Haile, Emmanuel and Dzathor (2016) utilize the importance of acknowledging women's contributions within managerial leadership roles as they help formulate the performance and overall management of an organisation. From studies, Alquhtani (2020) discusses how leadership effects women in the workplace because of gender bias, they refer on how promoting women to leadership positions within an organisation can hinder their career progression if the biases behind policies and procedures are ignored.

With the hospitality industry being an ever growing fast paced sector, there is still a lack of women within leadership positions. As stated by Baum (2013), women represent a significant portion of the hospitality industry, but it is not reflected in the amount of leadership roles that

they account. Guillet *et al.* (2019) discuss from studies how women in leadership positions within the hospitality industry can be continuously judged by both genders in the sector. They argue that if they show empathy, they are looked at for being too weak but if masculine behaviours are displayed, they are seen to be too harsh. It has been noted by Gewinner (2020) that women should be supported in the industry to achieve top level positions to help with their career progression as the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is an obstacle for the industry. They argue on how approaches should be made to help them succeed in these roles to prevent them from leaving the industry.

With there shown to be a lack of female leaders in positions within the hospitality industry, research has shown the positive impact they play. Women are seen to be more determined managers than that of men and can pose a democratic leadership style while men are more concentrated on the figures (Kumara, 2018). From studies, Groschl and Arcot (2014) also discuss the importance of women in leadership in hotels as they contribute to creating a positive economic turnover.

2.3.4: Gender Labour Segregation

Gender labour segregation has had an improvement across industries in recent years but still has a hindered effect on the growth of progression for women within the hospitality industry. As stated by the International Labour Office (ILO) (2003), gender segregation is in response to women being excluded in their occupation or workforce because of their sex which in turn can eliminate opportunities from them.

Research studies conducted by Pilatowska, and Witkowsha (2022) argue that gender labour segregation is still evident in industries across the EU which has resulted in the gender pay gap between males and females becoming more prominent. Casado-Diaz, Driha, and Simon (2020) distinguish from their research that the gender wage gap arises significantly for women in the hospitality industry as although they are highly qualified, they are undermarked because of segregation.

An article by The Irish Times (2024) conducted an interview with Diageo, one of Ireland's leading hospitality industries. They discussed how hiring more women in the industry is just a small hurdle but being able to support and retain them within their line of work is key to helping with their career progression. Russen, Dawson, and Madera (2021) identified through their

studies that although 50% of entry level managerial positions are made up of women in the hospitality sector, they only represent a near total of 20% in senior management positions. They also put arguments forward on how women were only seen to manage small hospitality firms and the removal of horizontal segregation in the hospitality industry should be eliminated to create gender diversity between men and women. Following this, Shirvastava, Jodhana, and Sing (2022) note how career progression is lacked for female managers as many hotels within the industry neglect from promoting female managers to senior managerial positions as they are unseen in these positions.

Gebbles, Gao, and Cai (2020) have argued that gender labour segregation has occurred predominately in the hospitality sector for women as they choose to work in lower positions to fulfil their domestic responsibilities. With this, horizontal segregation is present and develops to be challenging for women in terms of their career progression in the sector. Deiana and Fabbri (2020) also argue that women in hospitality tend to choose domestic responsibilities over their career progression which results in them having less opportunities than men to advance in their career.

2.3.5: Work/Life Balance

A work life balance is key to success in any organization but for women in leadership it can hinder their career growth. One of the biggest challenges that women face is the balance between their own personal family life and that of their working life (Sudha and Karthikeyan, 2014). With continuous studies outlining the responsibilities picked up in the home life by women following long working hours, there are arguments present illustrating that this can be one of the obstacles hindering the career progression for them into leadership positions (Twomey, Linehan and Walsh, 2002).

Doherty (2004) from studies, comments on how one of the main reasons for women failing to succeed in managerial leadership positions within the hospitality industry is that of the long working hours and lack of flexibility. In conjunction to this, Asinas *et al.* (2019) also argues that work/life balance for women is hindering their career growth within the hospitality industry as top management do not support family obligations which results in a pause being put on their career progression.

2.4: Conclusion

As acknowledged by Dashper (2020) hospitality jobs are highly gendered, with women more likely to be in low positions and face bigger challenges of career progression compared to alternative industries.

From this chapter, a brief synopsis was given on the research outlining what the main barriers and challenges are for women within the hospitality industry when progressing in their careers. With their being extensive research implemented and studies completed as to what the main barriers are for women within the hospitality industry, there has been a lack of research undertaken to develop and understand specifically what the main barriers are for senior female managers within the hospitality sector in Dublin.

With this, there are many gaps for the researcher to understand as to why these barriers are evident for female senior managers withing the Dublin hospitality industry and primary research will be conducted to help clarify what these barriers may be.

Chapter III: Research Question:

3.1: Research Question

The main topic of question to set out this research and study is as follows:

'What barriers and challenges are faced by senior female managers and how might they be overcome?'.

As set out in the research topic question, the researchers aim is to understand the reason as to why senior female managers within the hospitality industry in Dublin encounter barriers and challenges within the sector in terms of their career growth. As much research has been undertaken for barriers faced by women in the business world, there is a gap in literature for that of women in the hospitality industry and a severe gap for that of the Irish hospitality industry.

3.2: Research Sub-Questions

As stated previously, the researchers aim is to understand the current barriers if any, that senior female managers are faced with while progressing in their careers in the Irish hospitality industry within Dublin. Those stated below are the research sub-questions in which the researcher hopes to answer with the help of the research objectives.

1. What are the main concepts and viewpoints that people have on female managers in the hospitality industry?
2. What barriers do senior female managers within the Irish hospitality industry encounter when progressing in their career?
3. How have senior female managers tried to navigate these barriers with progression in their careers? Any personal barriers and or leadership available?
4. What recommendations and solutions can be developed for senior female managers within the Irish hospitality industry to overcome these barriers?

3.3 Research Objectives

Below outlines the objectives for this research study in conjunction to that of the research sub questions:

Objective One: To investigate and examine the barriers that female managers face in career progression from previous literature and research studies and to identify the main occurring themes of these barriers. The researcher also sets out to find the relationship of these barriers to that of the hospitality industry as there is a significant gap in literature that associates to the Irish hospitality industry.

Objective Two: To explore the opinions of those individual female managers who work directly within the Irish hospitality industry within Dublin on the barriers that they face in their current positions.

Objective Three: To examine how senior female managers have tried to overcome and navigate the barriers that they face with their career progression. The researcher sets out to understand if there are any external challenges that female managers face and distinguish how they navigate these barriers.

Objective Four: To propose recommendations and solutions, if any, that can be introduced by the Irish hospitality industry to help break barriers for female managers when progressing in their career. These recommendations can also be adapted by female managers when preparing for their career progression.

Chapter IV: Methodology

4.1: Introduction

Throughout this chapter, it is set out to describe and outline the justification for the research method used. Included in this chapter, the researcher will examine and identify the research paradigm, research philosophy, data collection approach and the data collection method that was used to collect the data to help answer that of the research question. Following this, the limitations and ethical considerations for the research study will be examined.

Although there has been a variety of mixed methods taken similarly in relation to the research question of topic, a qualitative approach will be followed to help the researcher understand the reasons behind the research question. Dashper (2020) argues how a qualitative study is best practice as the findings identify the continuous obstacles that women encounter as they try to progress in their careers in the hospitality industry.

4.2: Research Framework

This chapter will primarily look at following 'The Research Onion' as set out by Saunders Lewis and Thornhill (2019). The framework is designed to follow a series of layers and steps to develop and complete systematically by the researcher to help engage in a strong research methodology (Saunders *et. al*, 2019). As previously mentioned, following the layers of the research onion, the research philosophy, data collection methods and collection approach will all be discussed below.

4.3: Research Philosophy

Regarding a research philosophy as outlined by Saunders *et al.* (2019), it is the beliefs and assumptions that are gathered in line with the expansion and evolution of knowledge. It relates to the knowledge that is formed from developing research. A specific philosophy should be chosen within research as it helps to support the overall view of the research conducted. Positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism are the three main types of research philosophies (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Regarding the nature of this study, the researcher will integrate the interpretivism research philosophy to help guide this study but will also acknowledge that of the other two philosophies.

4.3.1: Interpretivism

Interpretivism or commonly referred to as the interpretive paradigm as outlined by Saunders *et al.* (2019) is the attempt that humans portray to try and understand the world that we are surrounded by. One of the main reasons for use of this paradigm is that concerns may arise as to what are the main reasons related to that of organisational life. It primarily focuses on that of the human being rather than the surrounding objects and it generates a better understanding of acknowledgement to be gathered from conducting interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Discovery that is produced through interpretivism is at a higher calibre and can allow for openness of interpretation compared to that of the approach gathered from a positivist philosophy (Pham, 2018).

With interpretivism and positivism approaches, they both produce positives and negatives to each. As interpretivism implements and acknowledges the personal views of a human being, it can result in creating more of a biased analysis towards the study whereas positivism follows set guidelines and procedures creating minimal error in the data collected (Pham 2028). With this, an interpretivism approach may provide a more in detailed evaluation and insight into the field of research which will allow the researcher to understand more prominently.

As this philosophy is regarding assumptions of social reality being formed by human experiences and social factors (Pham, 2018) and this thesis is set out to understand the main barriers and challenges for senior female managers in the hospitality industry in Dublin when progressing in their career, an interpretivism approach is conducted as part of this research study.

4.3.2: Positivism Approach

A positivism approach focuses on the explanatory relationships or associations that guide the control and prediction on the research in question (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). The approach sets out to uncover what the preliminary laws of nature are by expressing them throughout descriptive theories. With these theories they show focus to the explanation and predictions based on hypothesis surrounding the deductive model (Park *et al.*, 2020).

With the positivist approach, it evaluates less interpretation as it stems from being more objective with the approach being segregated from that of the analysis and is more controlled whereas interpretivism invites inclusion and allows participation between the researcher and participants (Collins and Hussey, 2014).

4.3.3: Pragmatism Approach

The pragmatism approach as described by Maarouf (2019) is the philosophical justification for a mixed method research approach, however, it can be criticised for not detailing the different assumptions of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. This approach is agreed to be the main philosophy that is the epicentre of linking and combining both quantitative and qualitative methods (Maarouf, 2019). With combining quantitative and qualitative methods, it can combine both interpretivism and positivism approaches in one singular study aligning to that of a research question.

4.4: Research Methodology Approach

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the interpretivist philosophy has been chosen as the main research philosophy for this research study. With this, an inductive approach will be taken. The main concept of an inductive approach is that it magnifies perceptions and meanings as well as contextualising the data. It invites on allowing participation from the researcher within the procedures that are being explored. With this approach, the theory follows the data unlike that of the deductive approach (Saunders *et al*., 2019). The deductive approach is like that of scientific research, it develops a theory which is then tested through several different propositions. It develops a basic explanation which helps to discover relationships between concepts and variables (Saunders et al., 2019).

As this investigation is researching what the main barriers and challenges are for women in the hospitality industry in Dublin when progressing in their careers, an inductive approach was applied which fits with that of the interpretivist philosophy. As acknowledged by Saunders *et al.* (2019), the connections of human beings and its significance of interpretations, the inductive approach is best suited with the interpretivist philosophy. Crossman (2016) outlines that with an inductive approach, once threads and concepts have gathered an understanding, themes and conclusions can be developed.

4.5: Methodological Choice

For the use of data collection, there are three main types of data that can be used, those being qualitative, quantitative and a mixed methods approach.

A qualitative research approach is implemented for this research study which is outlined in Appendix (A). Qualitative research magnifies and examines the social and personal experiences of one individual (Smith and Osbourne, 2008). With this type of data, interviews

are seen to be the most effective method used within qualitative research. It focuses on small, limited samples compared to larger samples that are used within quantitative research (Kvale, 2007). As stated at the beginning of this chapter Daspher (2020) argues on the importance of a qualitative approach to undermine what the main barriers are for female managers when progressing in their careers within the hospitality industry.

Saunders *et al.* (2019) describes quantitative research by involving that of numbers and statistics. The use of social research and methods of statements are used within this approach. Mixed methods is the research approach which uses both qualitative and quantitative data that is gathered by the researcher to use within the same study (Creswell, 2009). At the beginning of this research, a mixed method approach was mentioned in the research proposal to be assessed as part of the research analysis. A decision was made following the research proposal not to implement a mixed methods approach given the time constraints with the research as well as factoring in having limited access to a select number of mangers that would be the correct participants for this research study. Following the failure of implementing a mixed methods approach, this dissertation will follow a qualitative approach. The reasoning for this is that this method is most suited to the inductive approach that relates to the nature of this study (Saunders *et al.,* 2019).

4.6: Data Collection

Primary research is the methodology that implements researchers to conduct and gather information directly instead of solely relying on research and information that has been gathered or conducted from previous studies (Nykiel, 2007). Compared to that of primary research, Nykiel (2007) describes secondary research as data that is collected from current literature including that of journal articles, business reports and trade associations.

Throughout this dissertation paper, the secondary sources of data that were relied heavily on are that of journal articles, academic books and business reports. Secondary data was used and analysed throughout the literature review and primary research was gathered from conducting semi-structured interviews which can be viewed in Appendix (A).

With the sensitivity of the research topic relating to that of female leaders and barriers regarding their own career growth within the hospitality industry, the use of qualitative research and semi-structured interviews is the best approach that fits with this study. With semi-structured interviews, it allows the researcher to cover a wide selection of topics but can also help to position the interviews and discussion in the way that the interviewer wants to explore.

As evaluated by Leech (2002), they state on many ways to conduct an interview with the main forms being structured, semi-structured and unstructured. As the researcher employs to discover what barriers and challenges are faced by female managers in the hospitality industry and a variety of experience was preferred for a better study between all managers, the researcher chose the use of semi-structured interviews as it was the most appropriate to follow.

Semi-structured interviews are important as it allows for a face-to-face or one-to-one interview between the researcher and interviewee which results in the attention being focused on that of the interview itself. As this researcher wants to discover what, if any, are the main barriers and challenges those female mangers face with their career growth in the hospitality industry, the semi-structured interviews allow for more discovery and insight into the opinions and belief of the interviewee which could not be discovered if a quantitative approach was taken. The semi-structed interviews allows the interviewer to prepare in advance of all interviews and adjust any questions if needed given the flow of the interview. During two of the semi-structed interviews that were conducted, the research took the approach of adjusting or following up on questions to that of the interviewee's response.

A disadvantage of conducting the semi-structured interviews is that those who are being interviewed can change the conversation with their answers that is not related to the study which can result in inaccurate findings being developed from the interviews. Creswell (2014) discusses the importance of a pilot study as it allows for errors to be corrected. It helps the researcher to examine the questions being asked and determine if they are in relation to that of the study, while also enhancing and understanding the flow of the interview being undertaken.

A pilot study was conducted by testing the semi-structed interview questions with a colleague of the researcher. It allowed the researcher to understand the flow of the questions and if there was any repetitiveness with the questions by also discovering or eliminating if each question was understood by the participant. From the pilot study that was conducted, the interviewer changed the dynamic and order of which the questions were being asked as it gave more of a logical flow. Two questions were also eliminated from the interview questions as they became repetitive against others.

As justified by Perez *et al.* (2019) semi-structured interviews were conducted in their research and results from these interviews showed what main factors distinguished between gender equality for women in the hospitality industry.

As the researcher primarily wants to uncover what the main challenges and barriers are for female managers when progressing in their career within the hospitality industry in Dublin, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 senior female managers within the hospitality industry. Four of the interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams using the help of Microsoft Teams to transcribe the interviews, while the remaining two interviews were conducted in person. The interview questions had 12 questions in total which were gathered and formed following themes that were discovered through the literature review. The research questions were also implemented to help answer the research objectives. Each interview lasted between 20 and 25 minutes depending on the flow of the interview itself.

4.7: Sample Study

As stated by Saunders *et al,* (2019) an individual can be identified as a key informant in relation to the position that they uphold. A non-probabilistic sample was gathered and chosen for the purpose of this research in response to the research question as one of the main factors is to understand the barriers that female managers are faced with when progressing in their career in the hospitality industry within Dublin. As purposive sampling can choose participants based on specific characteristics, this method was chosen as the female managers can give an insight as to what barriers, if any are the main barriers that hinder their career growth within the industry.

The researcher reduced the sample size to that of female managers within different departments from three different hotels within the city centre of Dublin. Males were excluded from the study as the researcher wants to gather insight to what the barriers are for women in the industry directly and not the views that their male colleagues may have. Six female managers from different departments across three hotels in the city centre of Dublin were the participants and interviewees for this research paper. All the participants are colleagues or former colleagues of the researcher who reached out to all individually by email and phone.

4.8: Data Analysis

The data analysis that was applied throughout this research was that of a thematic analysis. This data is frequently applied to a set of interviews where the researcher examines that data and acknowledges the main common themes and patterns that have developed throughout the interviews. Following themes from the literature review and that of the semi-structed interviews, the researcher followed the thematic qualitative analysis of data following Clarke and Brauns (2016) process. From the process, the researcher familiarised the data that was

collected, coded the data into different sections which then allowed for themes to be generated. The reviewing of the themes allowed for them to be selected and named which also had connections to what was discovered throughout the literature review. With all the themes identified, it allowed for an understanding and help with writing up the findings from the interviews conducted.

4.9: Limitations

With all research studies, limitations can appear. From conducting this research, limitations were endured. One of the main limitations that the researcher encountered during this study was that of time constraints and the rescheduling of interviews. Given the position of the researcher in the hospitality industry, they under analysed the difficulty they would encounter when trying to recruit participants for the study.

As the hospitality industry is a 24-hour operation and the female managers work different times and days to that of the researcher it became difficult in some instances to schedule the interviews. With personal issues that the researcher experienced during the research study, it impacted the time constraints that were already in place only limiting the researcher to a small selection of participants which was also a limitation giving the recruitment struggles of finding the correct managers to take part in the study.

As most interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams the researcher considered connection problems or miscommunication between the participants when conducting the interviews virtually. Thankfully neither of these limitations occurred.

4.10: Ethical Considerations

There are certain ethics that were followed when conducting the research instrument and undergoing this research paper. All participants that took part in this study are anonymous and their anonymity was promised to be protected throughout this study.

The researcher created a consent form (Appendix B) to be sure that they were following all correct ethical guidelines as set out by National College of Ireland. All participants were notified about their participation being voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any given time without having to provide an explanation for withdrawal. Each participant was notified of the interviews being recorded on Microsoft Teams to be able to help transcribe the interviews and that the recording could be stopped at any given time. With all participants

signing the consent form, the researcher assured participants that the forms will be kept in a secure area following the GDPR guidelines of storing important documentation.

Finally, the researcher created and followed an estimate interview procedure (Appendix C) to prevent any ethical issues arising during the interviews.

4.11: Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis will undergo a thematic interpretivism approach. A qualitative method of using semi-structured interviews will be employed in this research to discover what barriers if any, hinder female managers in the hospitality industry in Dublin from progressing in their careers. The primary data was conducted from the semi-structured interviews and secondary data was gathered from journal articles and academic books. The limitations and ethical consideration of the study have also been put forward.

Chapter V: Finding & Analysis

5.1: Introduction

The main target for this chapter is to present the findings and analyse the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews that were undertaken by the author from the middle of June until the middle of July 2024. The research objective and that which was centred around the questions asked during the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) is to underline and discover the main barriers that senior female managers are faced with when processing in their careers within the Dublin hospitality industry.

The participants that took part in this study have all been working in the hospitality industry in Dublin for a variety of different years, have different years of experience, and work in different areas within their hotel. The participants were interviewed across three different 4-star hotel properties in Dublin, with most being based in the City Centre.

From the interviews that the researcher conducted, many common themes arose between participants highlighting the main barrier that they each faced while progressing in their career. In comparison to this, the researcher also discovered that not all participants experienced the same barriers and different problems occurred from others in terms of their working environment.

The findings that were gathered are critiqued carefully in respect to that of the research question that is being asked. The researcher forms connections and illustrates differences that helps to establish the findings of the research question and forms conclusions to each of the questions. This helps to expand further knowledge and form understanding of the main barriers and challenges that each female manager faces with their career's progression.

5.2: Personal Experience & Demographics

The first questions that were asked to each participant was regarding how long they have worked within the hospitality industry in Dublin and an outline of the main roles and responsibilities that they currently have. The below table outlines that of each participant that took part in this research study.

Table 5.2.1

Participant	Job Title	Years in Hospitality
Participant A	Human Resource Director	18 Years
Participant B	Guest Relations Manager	7 Years
Participant C	Duty Manager	8 Years
Participant D	Assistant Front Office Manager	9 Years
Participant E	Front Office Receptionist	1 Year + 9 Months
Participant F	Assistant F&B Manager	9 Years

5.3: Leadership

The main first set of questions focused on asking each participant about the different kinds of leadership that they experienced with their career growth, if any. The questions focused on the leadership that they encountered, and an explanation of the leadership that may have been received in the workforce.

A discovery was made from conducting the questions that there was a mixed approach to those participants who experienced leadership when starting out in their careers and those that lacked any type of leadership available to them.

Two out of the 6 participants (P) agreed that no leadership was available to them when starting out in the careers. An interviewee with up to 9 years of experience explained how leadership has become more available, but they did not encounter any direct leadership when starting in their own career. This finding aligns with what was found in the literature review as Gewinner (2020) states the importance of having leadership available to female managers in the industry to help better their careers. A participant that has 7 years of experience within the industry also states that their manager was primarily focused on the revenue of the hotel and no dedication was given regarding the growth and guidance of staff members.

'It has been available more recently but when I started no I never had a mentor or someone who was teaching me, it was just by observing and by just taking the best people that I liked that I see that they worked good I was just trying to learn from them, but I didn't have any direct leader or mentor that I could just follow.' – Participant D

In comparison to this, three participants that have a total of 20 years' experience between them all agreed that they were exposed to leadership and had the guidance when starting and advancing in their careers. All these 3 participants noted how they never felt that there was a lack of guidance or leadership available to them, help was always present. A participant with 8 years' experience during this research instrument acknowledged that if initiative was shown there was always full support available.

'I worked for a group for six of those years maybe a bit more and like that I never experienced that there wasn't any support or help there to get up the ladder, I didn't feel like I couldn't. There were always opportunities there to upscale to train once you showed a bit of initiative and you wanted to do it and it's kind of was related to your job. There was always full support there to do it.' – Participant C

In conjunction to that of the 5 participants, only one participant that has more than 15 years of experience within the industry experienced leadership but not in its full entirety. They explained that as they are working in HR, they had the leadership of their HR manager, but they were not always in a group setting. There was leadership and exposure from the different managers but not all had the HR knowledge that is needed to deal with the HR issues.

'I suppose the person that I would have looked up to most would have always been a group HR manager, but I wasn't always in a group setting either.' – Participant A

5.4: Mentorship

The next set of questions focused on asking each participants the type of mentorship that they experienced when advancing in their careers, if any. Although all participants had a variety of different comments in relation to this, the main majority were all in harmony that they experienced mentorship when progressing in their career and it is still readily available to them. Two interviewees that have 10 years of hospitality experience between them both outlined how they are part of a great working team and feel full support overall. The findings from secondary research as conducted by Feng Uen *et al. (2018)* can align with the findings as they distinguish on the importance of mentorship in the hospitality industry to help motivate employees and reach workplace expectations.

It was implied by an interviewee who has 7 years of experience within the industry how they had a great mentor within their previous job and was awarded with a promotion from the work

they had achieved. Although they state great mentorship was received, they didn't think it was reciprocated to others within the hotel.

'She was a great help and mentor as well, I know though for some people they didn't have the same opportunity as me, so they didn't have this mentorship available to them.' – Participant B

Regarding mentorship in terms of career progression, three of the participants A, C and D experienced mentorship while advancing in their careers but it came in different forms. They implied how they had a mentor to guide them, but it was implemented when they seek for it. They all made similar comments on how they experienced having a mentor when they looked for support with a job task, but it wasn't always readily available to them. This finding can compare to what was found during secondary research as Read *et al*. (2020) distinguished how females do not seek mentorship as it is unbeknownst to them. A participant with up to 20 years' experiences also argued over the importance of having a mentor as although you can have textbook knowledge you still need someone available to help guide you in the correct direction.

'I suppose if you went to college and you did your degree and whatever else you have the textbook knowledge, but you don't have the actual experience of doing it, and as much as you think you're ready for doing it with your knowledge you're not. You need someone there to guide you and to mentor you.' – Participant A

Following on from this, a final question was asked about women in leadership within senior positions and if they thought it is beneficial to have women in senior roles within the hospitality industry. Five out of the six participants all agreed in unison on the importance and benefits of having women in senior positions within the industry. Participant C did not note any difference of having a female or male in leadership positions as they expressed that you are as good as you are and no matter what your gender may be.

'I don't know is it as good as what you are, whether you're a man or a woman.' - Participant C

As all other interviewees made similar comments on the benefits of having women in leadership in the hospitality industry, a mixed variety of participants that have a wide difference of years' experience between them, similarly stated how women are more sensible and understanding then men and have a higher attention to detail. Participant A also implied the

importance of having women within leadership positions as they think outside the box compared to men who similarly have tunnel vision.

'Women are often more empathetic, supportive, capable of multitasking, and highly engaged. This not only promotes gender equality but also enhances organizational success through diverse perspectives.' – Participant E

From asking all participants about their experiences with mentorship and leadership while progressing in their careers it is evident that all participants have experienced different levels of mentorship and leadership and there has been a mix as to who has experienced more barriers than the other. This leads onto the next topic of questions asked which were generated around gender labour segregation and their views of experience within the hospitality industry.

5.5: Gender Labour Segregation

To help accomplish the research objective, a question was presented to each participant on their views of women and men being promoted to senior positions and if opinions were opposed on men having better opportunities.

Out of all six participants, only two participants that have an average of 8 years' experience between them, showed strong views on barriers still occurring for women to achieve senior positions in the hospitality industry. A participant with up to 7 years' experience stated, *'they do indeed, sometimes it is difficult for a woman when she is in the senior position to keep all the stress and keep the responsibility'*, with participant F adding *'Generally I do, and I feel it is not fair'*. This was a discovery for the researcher as less than half of the participants saw this as a barrier.

Although most participants made similar comments and had a similarity of views to women being promoted in the hospitality industry, there was a reoccurring theme shown between all. All participants have seen improvements, and it is not a primary barrier for them.

'From my experience in Ireland, I think that women have opportunities I have seen women have a lot of opportunities here in Ireland, so I have seen lots of women even young women in high positions which is good.' – Participant D

Some participants also made comments on how gender labour segregation may have occurred in the past but now it is something that is not seen as a barrier for women within the hospitality industry.

'I've never seen it that because you're a woman or you're a man you are getting a role because of that reason. Maybe I'll probably be naïve or else I haven't opened my eyes, but I haven't seen it, and it hasn't affected me.' – Participant C

Following this, a question was posed to understand if females had encountered any difference with working with male and females. Some of the participants had similar viewpoints on seeing no differences or obstacles between working with male or female managers in the hospitality industry. An interviewee with up to 8 years' experience described how they show different leadership styles, but it is not in response to being a male or female. One participant with less than 10 years' experiences also added how sometimes it can be preferred to work with male managers as it allows for a variety of different views. Participant B and E were both in agreement that male managers can prioritize their own success and create a toxic work culture.

Regarding working who male and female managers, one participant that has more than 8 years of experience made an interesting viewpoint regarding male and female managers in terms of their leadership style.

'Men are great managers not great leaders; women are great leaders not great managers from my experience.' – Participant B

5.6: Glass Ceiling

The main research objective for this dissertation was to discover and understand what the main barriers are for women when progressing in their careers in the hospitality industry.

To the researcher's surprise, all six participants stated that the biggest challenge and barrier when progressing in their careers was that of imposter syndrome and a lack of self-belief. These findings go against what was found in secondary research as Peshave and Gupta (2017) identified the glass ceiling, gender labour segregation and mentorship ad being the biggest barriers that effect female managers career growth within the hospitality industry. Majority of participants all outlined the biggest barrier was from themselves standing in their own way and not knowing their full potential. As a participant with up to 20 years' experience was also in agreement with most participants, they outlined how there was a lack of growth within their department which hindered the career progression. *'It's such a small department that you could be in the same role for several years and unless the HR manager or assistant HR manager was to leave, it's very hard for you to progress.'* - Participant A

A second question was put forward on how these barriers were overcome. Some if not all participants stated that they pushed through their challenges by taking the time to realise their strengths which helped them become stronger within their managerial positions.

Most of the participants also denied having any external factors affecting their career progression only that of one participant who outlines how being a mother can weigh heavier on parents than others. '*Being a mom and a housewife. The responsibility for these roles is always heavier for women. After long shifts, you have an extra shift. It's expected from all sides that we do more with less time, less sleep and you also need to look good and be nice after all.*'

5.7: Breaking Barriers

To help the researcher understand the participants views on the barriers that they have faced, a final question was posed on what strategies if any would help women achieve senior managerial positions in the hospitality industry.

Many of the participants noted that although they do not see any peripheral barriers relating to career progression, there are a selection of strategies that can be improved. All the participants excluded two interviewees who have a near total of 20 years' experience between them implied on the importance of having an open mind and speaking up if unfairness is experienced. Participant E expressed '*provide training to raise awareness of unconscious bias and its impact on career advancement decisions.*' in line with this, a participant with more than 10 years' experience also stated the importance of more flexibility being given to women and understanding their role as a woman.

To conclude the interview, each participant was asked if there was anything else related to the topic for discussion. Although a participant with more than 5 years' experience made a strong statement throughout the interview that no barriers were faced with career progression, they note that once they had reached the top, a lack of support was shown '*there was so much support getting up the ladder and when at the top of the ladder there could have had more continuous support.*' In reflection of this, all other participants made conjoining comments on how more opportunities need to be created for women and more leadership and mentorship should be available to help advance in their careers within the industry.

5.8: Conclusion

To conclude, all managers interviewed within this study acknowledge that there have been barriers hindering the career growth of women into leadership positions in the Irish hospitality

industry, but the industry has seen a significant improvement over the last few years and the barriers that were discovered from secondary data including the glass ceiling and gender labour segregation are not as prominent as they once were. All managers noted how over the last few years women are seen to be in higher positions within the industry which shows that women are being presented with better opportunities to progress within the industry and advance their careers.

The main finding from conducting the interviews revealed that one of the main barriers that female managers continuously face is that of their own self-imposed barriers and blocking their own selves from succeeding. It was also noted by most participants through this research instrument how better programmes of mentorship and leadership would have been more of a potential to help with the succession of their career with helping to eliminate the self-imposed barriers.

Following on from this, the next chapter will look at what the main discoveries were from the research objectives and introduce recommendations that can help the Irish hospitality sector within Dublin to better encourage the promotions of females within the industry. A recommendation of further research will also be discussed.

Chapter VI: Discussion

6.1: Introduction

The reason for conducting this research topic for this dissertation paper was aimed to investigate what barriers and challenges are faced by senior female managers and reasons on how they might be overcome. This chapter will provide a synopsis of the main findings that were encountered during this research topic including that of new discovery and will relate back to the research sub questions to help form a conclusion of the main findings.

Following on from the semi-structured interviews and research gathered throughout this study, recommendations will be put forward to help the hospitality industry in Dublin be more assertive towards these barriers and challenges those female managers in their hotels face but to also help those female managers when progressing further throughout their own career.

6.2: Main Findings

After completing that of the literature review and the findings of the semi-structured interviews, there are some main differences between the two. Those barriers and challenges that were found throughout the literature review are not in full contrast to what was gathered with the findings of conducting the research instrument.

Along with the research objectives, the first sub question of this study was presented to discover and understand what the main views of women in the hospitality industry are from existing research that is discussed throughout the literature review. From the secondary research, it was examined and uncovered that some of the main barriers faced by women within the hospitality industry are that of mentorship, the glass ceiling, societal barriers and gender labour segregation (Deiana and Fabbri, 2020; Fathy and Youssif, 2020; Peshave and Gupta, 2017). Some of these barriers were not seen to be barriers after conducting primary research and will be discussed below regarding that of the research sub-questions.

In terms of mentorship, as stated within the literature review as being a barrier for women in the hospitality industry when progressing within their careers, some of the findings from conducting the research instrument contradict this. Throughout the literature review it was discussed from previous research and studies including that by Caliunad, *et al.* (2020) on how mentorship is used within the hospitality industry to help with the onboarding of staff, but a lack of support is generated towards female managers to that of their male colleagues. To contradict this, following the findings collected throughout the research instrument, a vast majority of participants interviewed had a positive experience with mentorship in their own individual hotels and when progressing within their careers. Two of the participants that have

a vast difference in their years of experience both predominately agreed on how each have always encounter different types of mentorships in their hotel, and the support is felt throughout. Both of their views on the mentorship that they experience links back to the literature review as Scerri *et al.* (2020) discuss the importance of mentorship in the industry as it helps boost confidence for those female managers. It was also found from secondary research that mentorship may be available to female managers in the industry, it is not lacked but is something that is not sought after. Read *et al.* (2020) from secondary research studies has implied that mentorship is available, but it is disregarded as it is not looked for. This remark is in alignment with what was also discovered regarding mentorship when completing the research instrument. Many of the participants agreed that mentorship was there for them, but they had to seek for the mentorship for it then to be provided within their job positions. Mentorship programmes and the importance of them were found both throughout primary and secondary literature. This will be discussed in more detail as a recommendation throughout this chapter.

Leadership was also discovered through secondary research as being a barrier encountered by female managers. Similarly to mentorship, some secondary research that was uncovered regarding leadership as being a barrier for female managers in the hospitality industry contradicts to that of what was found when the research instrument was conducted. There was a mixed approach between the participants on who experienced leadership compared to the other. Majority of the participants within this research study discussed that leadership has been shown to them in different forms and they have never been without any sort of leadership when progressing in their own careers. This finding differentiates partly to what was uncovered from secondary data. From secondary data, Gewinner (2020) discusses obstacles within the hospitality industry being the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions by the lack of support they receive to achieve these positions. This differentiates from the findings as many of the participants agreed that women are seen to be in leadership positions more frequently than before. It does however have some alignment with primarily research as two participants with an average of 7 years' experience in the hospitality industry both acknowledged the improvement towards leadership, but it was not forthcoming when they started within their own career.

The impact of gender labour segregation was also seen to be a barrier and challenge of career progression that arose during secondary research which helped to answer that of the first research sub-question. From the primary research that was gathered, majority of the

participants disagreed with the ILO (2003) on their statement that women are disregarded from promotions in the workforce because of their gender. Majority of, it not all participants that have a vast majority of years' experience working in the hospitality industry made comments to support the argument that times have changed within the industry, and they do not see men having a higher advantage to women as they are becoming more open to opportunities.

To conclude, the first research sub-question and objective set out to answer what the main barriers and challenges are for female managers in the hospitality industry from secondary research currently available. Secondary research highlighted that some of these barriers included mentorship and leadership but from completing the research instrument many female managers had different views on what the main barrier that they face is, being that of self-imposed barriers which in turn was a new discovery for the researcher when conducting this study.

6.3: Extra Findings

The second and third research sub-questions along with their objectives for this dissertation were presented to answer what the main barriers and challenges if any, arise for female managers in the hospitality industry in Dublin from completing that of the research instrument. To the researcher's surprise, self-imposed barriers regarding self-belief was the main barrier that hinders the participants career progressing which had not been discovered from conducting secondary research.

6.3.1: Self-imposed Barriers

Self-imposed barriers as outlined by Friedlander (2024) are those barriers that place a negative mindset toward a successful outcome. With these barriers, they are boundaries that an individual creates to stop them from reaching a desired goal.

While conducting secondary research throughout this thesis paper, the researcher did not discover the lack of self-belief as being a barrier regarding career progression only from the one argument that was put forward by Boone *et al*. (2013) at the start of this study stating self-imposed barriers were a barrier for women as they focus more on family life than that of their own career growth.

During this research study, all participants brought to light on how their own self-belief is the main self-imposed barrier for them that has hindered their career progression to some effect.

As stated by Harris (2009) self-belief is the confidence that is lacked in an individual that eliminates them for achieving important goals or successions in their life.

From the completed research instrument, all female managers that were interviewed stated the only main barrier they have experienced that has had an impact on their career growth is that of their own lack of self-belief. Most female managers that have experience within the hospitality industry stemming from 3 to 9 years all outline that being a block in their own path and lacking self-confidence was the biggest barrier for them. In conjunction with this finding, secondary research also suggests that women tend to have less confidence in themselves which in turn limits their level of career progression by the lack of self-promotion that is done through networking (Nelson, 2014). With this new finding, it leaves an element for future research to be conducted on what the reasons may be that create the lack of self-belief in terms of their career growth in the hospitality industry and if male colleagues experience the same.

With the second and third sub-questions being answered and integrating with one another in reference to female managers having self-imposed barriers as their biggest barrier to progress, and overcoming these barriers on their own terms, it leads to the fourth sub-question of recommendations that can be put in place as discovered from both primary and secondary research.

6.4: Future Recommendations

The last and final research sub-question along with the research objective sets out to propose recommendations and possible solutions that can help the Irish hospitality industry in breaking down these barriers for female managers when progressing in their careers which can also be adapted by those female managers.

6.4.1: Mentorship Programmes

From secondary research that was gathered during this thesis, suggestions were made towards the importance of mentorship programmes for female progression within the hospitality industry. Relating back to the literature review, from their research, Kestwal (2017) distinguish how the importance of mentorship programmes within the industry helps those female managers to motivate them for the future planning of their career growth. In alignment with these findings, it was also discovered throughout primary research that those senior female managers who took part in this research study acknowledged how having mentorship programmes within their own hotels would help with the fulfilment of their own career growth.

With having mentorship programmes, it creates a powerful path to develop leadership skills and push for career progression within the industry. Having these programmes can also boost employee performance, create an open space for employee engagement and integrate a space for learning. All mentorship programmes are not the same and can be tailored to fit different business styles.

It is to be recommended that hotels within Dublin create their own individual mentorship programmes that can help with the progression of their own female managers. With this, each hotel should outline the main challenges and goals that are wanting to be achieved from the programme. By identifying what the competencies are that the female managers need to progress and how the programme aligns with the hotel's strategy, a mentorship style programme can be formatted. With this, each hotel can agree if the programme will be formal or informal including the times in which the mentor and mentee will work alongside each other. The outcome of conducting these programmes in each individual hotel will set out a design to incorporate skill development which in time will help the career progression of senior female managers within the hotel. Having these programmes in place will allow for senior managers to seek the mentorship available and allows for them to be paired with a mentor that they think can contribute to their career growth.

6.4.2: Wellbeing Initiatives

Like that of the mentorship programmes, exploring wellbeing initiatives in hotels within Dublin is a recommendation that can help break the self-imposed barriers for female managers in terms of their career progression. As stated during this chapter, those self-imposed barriers are a prime finding from conducting the primary research.

From secondary research, it illustrates on how the quality of a guests experience within the hospitality industry relates to the wellbeing of employees regarding their emotional labour as they must serve and interact with guests' day to day. The research also implies on the importance of wellbeing within the hospitality industry as it is a sector that can create a hostile working environment (Ponting and Ponting 2023).

Wellbeing initiatives are recommended to be introduced into the hospitality industry to help female managers overcome their own lack of self-belief. The introduction of wellbeing seminars, employee assistance programmes and weekly or monthly check ins with their general managers can in time break down the self-imposed barriers for female managers by allowing them to uncover their own self-belief and potential to strive with their career growth.

6.5: Timeline and Costing

Following the recommendations above that the researcher has discussed as solutions that can contribute to overcoming the barriers for senior female managers when progressing in their careers in the hospitality industry, a timeline and estimate cost of these recommendations are put forward.

Regarding a timeline for the recommendations as set above, the researcher believes that mentorship programmes and wellbeing initiatives will be ongoing within the Irish hotel industry and cannot be given one specific timeframe. A timeframe for the mentorship programmes will vary in length depending how long the mentor and mentee intend to conduct the programme. The programmes timeframe will also be different to each hotel and may stem over a period of six months to one year. There is no amount of time that can be put on wellbeing initiatives as the researcher believes that these initiatives will be consistent throughout each year.

Costing is a big factor that plays a part in the development and implementation of any programme in the hospitality industry. The researcher recommends each hotel in Dublin to budget a total cost of €50,000 for the development and implementation of these programmes. This is based off a 12-month programme with an inclusion of 100 hours for programme completion. The researcher believes these mentorship programmes should be no shorter than six months so a justification for the cost of a year-long programme is presented.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

7.1: Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis sets out to uncover what barriers and challenges are encountered by senior female managers within the hospitality industry in Dublin when progressing in their careers and recommendations to overcome these barriers have been put forward.

Secondary research was gathered throughout the literature review which uncovered many barriers that those female managers face include that of the glass ceiling, gender labour segregation and a lack of mentorship within the industry. To contradict these barriers, primary research found that these barriers are not main challenges or concerns, self-imposed barriers relating to the lack of self-belief within each individual manager that took part in this research paper was the biggest discovery that was found.

The research instrument used to conduct and gather primary research was that of semi-structed interviews. As previously mentioned throughout this thesis paper, Dashper (2020) argues on the importance of using qualitative data to understand what the main barriers are for women within the hospitality industry. The researcher used this research method as they wanted to discover what specifically were the main barriers if any for those female senior managers working in the hospitality industry within Dublin.

7.2: Implications of Study

In retrospect to the barriers that were discovered during the research instrument, it can be noted that there is limited secondary research available that reflect on self-imposed barriers being a main barrier that can hinder a female manager's career growth within the hospitality industry but also in any other working environment.

As this research was aimed at discovering what the main barriers and challenges are encountered by those female managers when progressing in their careers within the hospitality industry, the researcher believes that this thesis will better help the hotel industry in Dublin understand the barriers that their own female managers may face and will help to implement the recommendations provided. The researcher also hopes that the primary data gathered throughout this dissertation paper will help future researchers and academic students aid further in-dept research to why these self-imposed barriers occur.

7.3: Future Research

As there is limited secondary research available on self-imposed barriers relating to the lack of self-belief that contributes to hindering the career progression of senior female managers within the hospitality industry, future research is needed to understand the full extent to why female managers experience these barriers.

The author believes further research can be undertaken to better understand why this barrier occurs. As the researcher had previously intended to undertake a mixed method approach but did not complete with regards to time constraints, the researcher believes a mixed method approach can be conducted for future research. The mixed method approach should include the distribution of surveys and focus groups can be developed to better understand this challenge.

As this thesis paper gathered primary research from a small sample of senior female managers within three different properties in Dublin, the researcher believes further research can be conducted by asking a vast selection of women within the hospitality industry what barriers they may encounter including that of line employees. With this, the researcher also suggests including males within the future research to understand if they have any different views or aspects as to what barriers, if any, their female colleagues may experience with their career progression.

The researcher also suggests further analysis and research to be conducted on other business within the hospitality sector including that of restaurants and tourism organisations to gather if women within these establishments encounter the same barriers to those within hotels.

7.4: CIPD Requirements

As stated earlier within the discussion chapter, the researcher put forward recommendations for hotels within Dublin to help break the barriers that senior female managers face within their hotels regarding their own career growth.

The researcher recommends for mentorship programmes and wellbeing initiatives to be introduced to hotel properties in Dublin to break down the self-imposed barriers that senior female managers encounter. With the mentorship programmes and wellbeing initiatives there is no certain time frame or costing that can be put in place as they will continuously change over time.

7.4.1: Personal Learning Statement

The researcher has been very apprehensive and disquieted throughout the whole process of writing and completed this thesis as it is something that they have never done before. With completing a business plan for their bachelor's degree, undertaking and understanding the process of a thesis paper was a big hurdle to overcome.

Like that of what was found to be a main barrier for female managers during this study, the lack of self-belief and worry was a big obstacle to overcome for the researcher. With that being said, the researcher has learned a lot and grown as an individual throughout this whole process. Self-discipline, time management and gaining some self-belief were they key elements that helped the researcher throughout the writing of this thesis paper.

The researcher has also learned the importance of forward thinking and planning their time as contingencies can occur. From having contingencies occur during the writing of the thesis, the researcher was able to overcome them at best, with the result of their forward thinking of having plans and targets in place at the beginning of conducting this thesis paper.

As the researcher works within the hospitality industry in Dublin, they have been intrigued from the start of this study to understand what barriers if any that their female colleagues experience during their career growth. Throughout completing this thesis, the views of the researcher have also changed compared to when the writing first began. The researcher does think the hospitality industry is changing, and females do not encounter barriers like they may have a few years ago. With the industry continuously evolving, the researcher believes that there are more opportunities for growth available to female managers and more female managers are in senior positions compared to what it was like in the past.

The research that has been conducted and gathered throughout this thesis has also giving the researcher valuable insights and has helped them to overcome their own lack of self-belief.

To conclude, the researcher hopes that the research gathered will help with further research to undercover why female manager lack self-belief and if there are any further solutions that can contribute to helping them overcome this barrier.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions:

Personal Experience/Demographics:

1. How many years of experience do you have working withing the hospitality industry?

2. What is your current position that you are working in, and can you please briefly describe your role and what it involves?

Mentorship & Leadership:

3. When progressing in your career in the hospitality industry, was there any leadership available to you? If so, what type of leadership did you encounter?

4. As well as leadership did you have a mentor that heled you with your career growth or was this something that was unavailable to you within your organisation?

5. What do you think are the benefits of having women in leadership and in senior managerial positions within the hospitality industry?

Gender Labour Segregation:

6. Do you feel within this industry, women have more of a hard time than men being promoted into senior positions?

7. What is it like working with male managers? Do you feel there is a difference or more opportunities for them?

Glass Ceiling/Barriers:

8. When progressing in your career, what do you think has been then biggest barrier for you.

9. When faced with these barriers was there anything that you implemented to help you to overcome them and progress in your career?

10. Aside from these barriers, are there any personal or societal barriers that have stopped you when progressing in your career?

Breaking Barriers:

11. What strategies would you recommend breaking down the barriers for females achieving senior managerial positions within the Irish Hospitality Industry?

12. Is there anything else that you would like to add or discuss?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Consent Form
Researchers Name: Clíona Giblin
Faculty/School: National College of Ireland
Title of research study:
Below to be filled by the interviewee
- Have you been informed, and do you understand the purpose of this study? **Yes/No**   - Have all questions asked been answered in full by the interviewer? **Yes/No**   - Have you received correct information regarding the study, and do you understand the health & safety implications? **Yes/No**   - Do you understand that you can withdraw from this study at any given time without having to explain withdrawal? **Yes/No**   - Do you understand by taking part in this study, the results may be published? **Yes/No**   - Have you been made aware that this consent form will be kept by the interviewer following GDPR procedures? **Yes/No**
Signed _____   Date_____ Researchers Signature _____   Date _____

Appendix C: Interview Procedure

Introduction: (1 minute)

- Introduce the study with reasons and aims behind it.
- Confirm agreement with using a recording device
- Advise the study is anonymous

Personal Experience/Demographics: (4 minutes)

1. How many years of experience do you have working withing the hospitality industry?

2. What is your current position that you are working in, and can you please briefly describe your role and what it involves?

Mentorship & Leadership: (8 minutes)

3. When progressing in your career in the hospitality industry, was there any leadership available to you? If so, what type of leadership did you encounter?

4. As well as leadership did you have a mentor that heled you with your career growth or was this something that was unavailable to you within your organisation?

5. What do you think are the benefits of having women in leadership and in senior managerial positions within the hospitality industry?

Gender Labour Segregation: (5 minutes)

6. Do you feel within this industry, women have more of a hard time than men being promoted into senior positions?

7. What is it like working with male managers? Do you feel there is a difference or more opportunities for them?

Glass Ceiling/Barriers: (8 minutes)

8. When progressing in your career, what do you think has been then biggest barrier for you.

9. When faced with these barriers was there anything that you implemented to help you to overcome them and progress in your career?

10. Aside from these barriers, are there any personal or societal barriers that have stopped you when progressing in your career?

Breaking Barriers: (4 minutes)

11. What strategies would you recommend breaking down the barriers for females achieving senior managerial positions within the Irish Hospitality Industry?

12. Is there anything else that you would like to add or discuss?