

# Experiences of Career and Family from a Working Mothers Perspective

Naomi McGrath (1603808), Supervisor Name: (Dr. Niall Hanlon)

## Abstract

The research strived to gain a deeper and better understanding of women's perception's and experiences as mothers and professionals from their point of view. The research was qualitative in nature and the data was gathered using a series of semi structured interviews. Six purposively selected participants were interviewed and the gathered data was examined using thematic analysis. The findings exposed the complexity of women's experiences as mothers and career professionals. The literature reviewed displayed that there is significant research being done on women in the work force and the provision of fair maternity rights. However, more work is needed to explore the personal effects combining work and motherhood has on women themselves. The report found that women may find themselves having to choose between advancing in their careers and taking a conscious step away to raise young children. The current social and policy provisions that are in place in Ireland require much more Governmental focus on the provision of childcare in relation to maternity and paternity benefits. The continued closing of the gender pay gap and genuine recognition of women's role in society is required.

## Introduction

Currently in Ireland today there are approximately 975,000 women in the labour force. The European Commission also reports that of these women over 500,000 of them also have children and have a dual role, encompassing the paid work and a caring role. This study aimed to take a look at how professional women experienced becoming mothers in the context of career and family life. Several factors emerged throughout the research, gender, maternity rights, choice and financial concerns. The literature reviewed suggests that there is continued work being done to close the gender gap between men and women. However, inequalities in career and family sphere still exist and require more attention.



## Methodology

A qualitative research method was adopted for this study. Six semi structured interviews were carried out to collect data.

Interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants using a Dictaphone. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. In order to ensure confidentiality the interviewee where referred to as participant 1-6. QSR NVIVO 10 was used to sort themes and aid in data analysis.

The participants consisted of 6 female professional working mothers. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they met the required criteria.

The most suitable method of analysis for the chosen area is thematic analysis; hence a qualitative data led thematic analysis method was adopted. QSR Nvivo 10 was used to sort, code and analyse themes.

## Results

- 1. Professional Success:** The desire for professional success does not stop when women become mothers.
- 2. Maternity Rights:** The provision of maternity leave did not impact on the decision to have children but helped to make life easier.
- 3. Gender:** Women were subtly directed towards female appropriate careers.
- 4. Empathy:** Increased level of empathy was reported by all participants. There was a belief that this made them more well rounded bosses.
- 5. Love & Caring:** The expectation was that the working mothers would also be responsible within the family for the majority of love and caring. It was reported that this was done instinctively.
- 6. Choice:** The suggestion is that when children are small the women did not have a lot of choice and all choice they did make were difficult as either family or career suffered. As children grew up, the women felt more choice became available to them.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to gain an insight in to lives of professional working mothers and to explore more deeply how they perceive becoming a mother has impacted on their career and family choices. The contribution that women make in the labour force is incredibly important in the society we live in and as the participants found the more societal and governmental support available to families the less arduous women's choices become.

## References

- Byrne-Doran, J. (2012). A Qualitative Study of Working Mothers in Ireland: An Exploration of 'Lived Experiences'. *International Journal Of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 6(11), 101-113.
- Hoobler, J. M., Wayne, S. J., & Lemmon, G. (2009). Bosses' Perceptions of Family-Work Conflict and Women's Promotability: Glass Ceiling Effects. *Academy Of Management Journal*, 52(5), 939-957