

**Middle Age Mother's Perspectives on Children's Rights within Irish
Families**

Student Name: Ashling Kennedy

Student Number: 1337380

Module: Social Science Research Project A8RS012

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts
degree (Social Science Specialization) at DBS School of Arts, Dublin.

Supervisor: Dr Niall Hanlon

Head of Department: Dr Bernadette Quinn

April 2014

Department of Social Science

DBS School of Arts

Title

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of people who have supported and assisted me in the preparation of this thesis. A huge thank you to all the mothers for kindly giving up their time and volunteering to participate in this study. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my husband, close friends and family for their support and in particular my supervisor, Dr Niall Hanlon for the wise advice and guidance throughout this process.

Abstract

Children's rights is a relevantly new concept, potentially affecting children and parents lives in many ways but the full impact is unknown as there continues to be a lack of research-based understanding of children lives in Ireland (DOHC, 2000, Thompson, 2012). The aim of this research is to explore how middle age mothers perceive children rights in the family by identifying mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children. A qualitative research approach involving a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with the aid of Nvivo and a purposive sampling method comprising of nine Dublin middle age mothers was employed. Four key themes emerged and it is evident the high value and respect middle age mothers have for their children, meeting their rights in many areas of their lives. However the lack of conceptual awareness and of viewing children in a rights-based approach was also found.

Introduction

Children's rights is a relevantly new modern topic in Ireland. Thompson (2012, p. 188) states a vital first step in understanding the impact of children's rights is to document and outline the potential various changes in the everyday lives of children connected with their political rights. In particular, this author emphasises the lack of research aimed at how the recognition of children's rights and legal changes are affecting how families function in their treatment of children. The national children's strategy stated the importance of recognising the changing context of children's lives and besides recent developments and apparent interest in conceptualising children there remains to be limited research-based understandings of their lives (DOHC, 2000, p. 38). According to Jones (2005, p. 340) recognising children's rights within law and policies emerges a need to figure out and study the understanding's and implementation of these rights, especially in the context of parenting. The present study aims to address this gap and explore how middle age mothers perceive children's rights in the family in Ireland by identifying mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children in the family. A further aim of the research is to identify middle age mother's opinions on and awareness of, the concept of children's rights.

The Evolution of Children's Rights

According to Lalor (1998, p. 45) the study of children in history is a recent one and in Europe the concept of childhood did not emerge until the late seventeenth century. Before this, children received no special recognition and were seen as miniature adults. Woodhouse (1999) challenges us to think of "a world in which the strongest were free to beat, starve, exploit, imprison and terrorize their neighbours, while the police looked the other way and ignored their cries for help" (p. 4), as this was the world many children lived in. Lalor (1998, p. 14) concluded in his paper on the historical context of child sexual abuse, as early as the

sixth and twelfth century there were traces found of child sexual abuse in the Penitential and Brehon Law's, disturbing society to the fact that the sexual abuse of children was only discovered, rather than commenced in the late twentieth century.

Moving on, in the twentieth century the dominant approach towards the concept of childhood was based on child's welfare and need for protection which was largely protective and paternalistic in nature. (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 2). Franklin (1992) discovered an attitude of ageism towards children that visualised them in a position of adult domination and dependency, evoking situations where children have been exploited and abused as well as protected. (Franklin, 1992, as cited in Hayes, 2002 p. 32). Hayes (2002, p. 32) states it has produced a situation where children are compared to adults and viewed as less able and rational, labelled more by what they cannot do than what they can do. All this has resulted in the common view of the twentieth century that children are passive, irrational, immature and dependent on their parents and others. However recent research in both psychology and sociology has progressed from the traditional approach of studying children to a focus on understanding childhood and children's wider socio-cultural context in which they live (Hayes, 2002, p. 33).

In the twenty first century, there has now been a move away from a welfare based approach to a rights based approach in which children are viewed as active participants, with a right to be heard, listened too and consulted on matters that impact them. However this process has been extremely slow to implement (Kilkelly, 2008, Hayes, 2002, Children's Rights Alliance, 2010). According to Hayes (2002 p. 16-17), the rise in international awareness of the rights of children can be traced to the work of Eglentyne Jebb who drafted the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, a short and simple policy which was

adopted by the League of Nations in 1924 and was revised in 1948. This occurred mainly due to the realisation of the unique nature of children due to their dependency. In 1959 the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child was published but it had no binding powers resulting in limited impact and it was not until 1979, the International Year of the Child, in which countries began to review the national status of children. According to the Children's Rights Alliance (2010, p. 1) the most significant development was on the 20th of November 1989 when the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children commonly known as the CRC, was adopted by the UN General Assembly.

Following on from the above Hayes (2002, p. 17) stated the idea that a convention was needed at all, highlighted the degree to which children's rights were being exploited. Verhellen (1992) argued the discovery of the fact that some adults harm their children instead of caring for and protecting them was the driving force behind society wanting to look at the way, in general, it related to children (Verhellen, 1992, as cited in Hayes, 2002 p. 32). The Children's Rights Alliance (2010, p. 1) stated that the UNCRC has become the most significantly ratified human rights treaty in history with every nation in the UN, except the US and Somalia, ratifying it. It is "striking evidence of a major twentieth-century revolution in how we conceptualize children's law" (Martin, 2000, p. 7). In particular four articles are specially emphasised, known as the 'general principles', the best interests of the child must be given primary importance in every action impacting on the child, all the rights outlined by the convention must be available to every child without discrimination, all children have the right to life, survival and development and lastly the child's views must be heard and taken into account in all matters affecting them (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, p. 2). However, internationally and in Ireland, there is still continuous discussions regarding the practicalities

and scope of children's rights and on a theoretical level, if children can be pictured as rights-holders (Martin, 2000, p. 1). This point as well as the changing notions of childhood highlight the need for further research such as this to investigate mother's current perceptions of children's rights and understandings of and treatment of their children in the family.

Policy Development and Children's Rights in Ireland

Moving on from the above, Ireland has been going through a phase of modernization in last few years and social policy has become very complicated with each country subjected to local, national and supranational political influence (Archer, 2008, p. 82). In 1992, Ireland ratified the CRC and entered a binding agreement committed to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of children outlined in the Convention. The Irish state agreed to develop and change their laws and policies to implement the rights detailed in the Convention (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, p. 1). According to Considine & Dukelow (2009, p. 375) the 1990's in Ireland marked the beginning in the recognition of the needs of children and significant debates opened up regarding the position of children in society. The Child Care Act 1991, triggered by the recent child abuse reports, replaced the outdated Children Act 1908. This act defined the role of the State in protection and child welfare and changed policy focus from the paternalistic, reactive approach to a more accountable, pro-active approach (Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, p. 3).

In 2000, the most significant development in the area of children's rights was the publication of the National Children's Strategy. This is a child-centred strategy emphasising the importance of children's voices and participation in decision-making as well as the need for further research to gain a better understanding of children. Even though it is not a rights-based strategy, it signifies the start of a move forward to considering rights in policy

development (DOHC, 2001, p. 16). In 2004, another significant event was the appointment of Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children and the office's two main goals were to promote the welfare and rights of children and to investigate issues against public bodies, schools and voluntary hospitals. In 2011, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs was established and one of its main responsibilities is to take over the structures initially for progressing the Children's Strategy and strengthening children's rights. And lastly, in 2012 a referendum, strengthening certain aspects of children's rights in the Irish constitution was held (Considine and Dukelow, 2010, Children's Rights Alliance, 2010, Hayes, 2002).

However according to the Children's Rights Alliance (2010, p. 4) the realization of children's rights is still a struggle for Ireland. Ireland is still using in many situations a welfare-based approach rather than a rights-based approach to deal with children's issues and is also prevented from fully implementing the CRC as the convention's principles have not been brought into domestic law. According to Hayes (2002), even though law and policy language has changed the underlining beliefs picturing children as dependent and passive have still remained and Irish policy is still dominated by a protectionist welfare approach, "labelling children as problems needing solutions and dependents needing protection" (Hayes, 2002, p. 85). Considine & Dukelow (2009) also clearly stated that "Ireland still has a long way to go on its journey to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child" (p. 378). Nevertheless what it is evident is that there has been significant developments and with that comes the obligation to study the impact these changes are having on how families are functioning in their understandings of and treatment of their children. In particular middle age mothers, as they have potentially experienced a significant amount of change and adjustment in how they conceptualise the child.

The Meaning of Children's Rights for the Parent Child Relationship in Ireland

Moving on from the above, children's rights not only has impacted law, policy and institutions it also has meaning for the parent child relationship and family unit. According to Considine & Dukelow (2009) the position of children historically in Ireland was viewed as a concern of private responsibility and parents were seen as the sole person responsible for providing protection and care. Hayes (2002) stated the Constitution of Ireland identified the family "as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of society in which parents have inalienable and imprescriptibly rights" (p. 46). However the meaning of children's rights for parents as stated in the CRC makes it clear that parents should not view themselves as the "owner" of the child but seen as the "trustee" of the child's welfare. They should act in the best interests of the child, viewing them as active participants with a right to be listened to and opinion considered, leading them in actualizing their rights in line with their capabilities (Woodhouse, 1999, p. 2-3). Woodhouse (1999, p.2) further states it is not only the role and responsibility of the government but the parent too in ensuring that children's rights outlined in the UNCRC are respected and fulfilled.

Following on from the above the infamous Kilkenny Incest Investigation 1993, a shameful child abuse case, emphasised the need for constitutional change to include a statement of the constitutional rights of children because the "high emphasis on the rights of the family in the constitution may consciously or unconsciously be interpreted as giving a higher value to the right of parents than to the rights of children" (Ombudsman for Children's Office, 2005, p. 9). According to the Children's Rights Alliance (2012, p.1) the strengthening of children's rights in the constitution in 2012 has now meant parents have an empowerment tool for helping them to ensure the state uphold their child's rights, families struggling get better support, children in state care are allowed the opportunity to be adopted and in matters

relating to child protection, care, adoption, guardianship, custody and access cases the best interests of the child as well as their opinions in the courtroom are considered.

However according to Hayes (2002, p. 47) the tensions between the rights of parents and the rights of children have dominated much of the debate around children's rights in Ireland. Kilkelly (2008, p. 4) argues that the most widespread opponents against children's rights worry it will lead to closer inspection of the family and may hurt and weaken parental power. Martin (2000, p. 3) stated that some Irish people believed it would unnerve the delicate socio-legal balance that exists within the family unit. However the fact is that the CRC and the European Convention on Human Rights place a high value on the family, recognising the importance of family life to children and protecting the family from unlawful intervention (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 4). According to Hayes (2002, p. 47) the CRC does not aim to belittle parents authority but instead provide them with a useful tool to ensure that the rights of children are not invisible. Kilkelly (2008, p. 11) also states the rights language is very useful in conveying children's valid claims in the family as it communicates the role of the government and the parent in meeting children's needs in the form of duties and obligations. The rights approach also helps to address the problems in child and family law where the rights of parents and children may be in conflict.

And lastly in relation to mothers in Ireland they continue to take on the primary role of carer of children, potentially causing extra pressures in trying to balance both paid work and the emotional and domestic labour associated with child rearing. (Share et al, 2012, p. 137) Barry (2008, p. 2) stresses the immense majority of unpaid work is carried out solely by women and this double shift can leave women feeling they are never good enough either as mothers or workers (Collins, 2006, as cited in Share et al, 2012, p. 137). It is evident, the

recent constitutional changes, parents ambivalent feelings towards the children's rights concept and the benefits of such a concept for both the parent and the child all highlight the importance and need for this research to be undertaken. The above also emphasises the need to study mothers in general, understandings of and treatment of children in the family, due to the extra pressures they may experience in child rearing in Ireland.

Future Challenges surrounding the Full Recognition of Children's Rights in Ireland.

Moving on from the above there are potentially many challenges surrounding the full realization of children's rights in Ireland. Martin (2000, p. 7) states the unusual balance between individual members within the family unit can be dramatically changed, by assigning rights to children. According to Woodhouse (1999, p. 4) theorizing about children's rights encounters many paradoxes and the government sometimes need to intervene in the family against the wishes of parents and the right to family privacy, to protect children's rights. For example in relation to children's right to maintain contact with parents and family, the child's mother is still classified as the sole guardian in the case of unmarried parents in Ireland. The fact that the unmarried fathers has no automatic right to be guardian of their child, even where he is on the birth certificate and contributes financially and in other ways to the child's welfare has caused serious problems in Ireland for children rights (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 116). Martin (2000, p. 7) further states finding the right balance between parent's and children's rights in many areas of their lives will be the challenge that needs to be met in the twenty-first century in Ireland.

As well as the above Kilkelly (2008, p. 5) argues that it is children's rights in the private sphere, the family which have caused the most debate, as some people are against children having rights of a particular kind or in a particular area of their lives. In particular

the banning of physical punishment in the family setting in Ireland is required if Ireland are to fully recognise children's rights in law. According to DOHC (2009, p. 2) corporal punishment of children is prohibited in nearly all settings in Ireland but common law recognizes the right of parents to use moderate and 'reasonable chastisement'. However parents in Ireland may resist such a ban as seen in New Zealand as it represented for some people an unwelcomed intrusion in the family and signalled a move towards a nanny state (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 5). Kilkelly (2008, p. 7) also pointed out that the category of self-assertive rights, rather than protection rights is another area in Ireland which has caused most concerns for people who have opposed the concept of children's rights. These rights include phrases such as independence, autonomy, self-determination which can make adults feel that the recognition of children's rights involves children's emancipation from adults. However it needs to be highlighted to parents that it is really about respecting and recognising the right of children to be consulted, listened to and involved in the decision-making process rather than having their demands fulfilled. It is evident from the above the importance of conducting further research into mothers understanding of and treatment of their children in the family in relation to decision making and discipline.

And lastly in a recent report on the State of the Nation's Children, six barriers to the realization of children's rights in Irish law and practice were identified (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 21). In particular the study found a lack of research on the awareness of children's lives and an urgent need to create greater awareness about children's rights among children and parents. The report stated that as parents play a central role in protecting children's rights, further support is needed to provide more information and awareness about their children's needs and rights (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 22). The report concluded that even though there has been significant change, the concept of children as individuals with their own right is still

heavily unrecognised and has prevented society from achieving the full protection of children's rights. (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 24). Based on the above it is vitally important to investigate the current level of awareness of the concept of child's rights among mothers, which is what this research report intends to do.

In conclusion it is apparent, despite Ireland's visible dedication to the CRC, it has been slow to adopt children's rights in legislation and practice. Ireland still maintains a welfare based approach rather than a rights based approach when dealing with children and the move away from the paternalistic approach, where adults know best, to recognising children as right-holders, with a right to be heard, has not happened fully in government and in society. As well as this children's rights continue to be misinterpreted as a threat to parent's autonomy and the government's failure to raise awareness about children's rights among parents has allowed these misconceptions to dominate. For a rights based approach to be fully achieved, Ireland would also need to prohibit the use of physical punishment in a family setting which may potentially be resisted by parents. Nevertheless what is clear is that Ireland has made significant developments in law, policy and practice which are potentially affecting how parents function in their everyday treatment of their children, however there is a lack of research on the awareness of children's lives making it difficult to document the impact. The present study aims to address this gap and explore how Irish middle age mothers perceive children's rights by identifying mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children in the family. A further aim of the research is to identify mother's opinions on and awareness of, the concept of children's rights.

Method

Design

For this research a qualitative method approach was adopted because the study sought to establish the perspectives and the opinions of the participants. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that adopts ‘a naturalistic interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena within their social worlds’ (Snape et al, 2003, p. 3). In order to collect rich, in depth qualitative data, semi-structured face to face interviews were employed and a purposive sampling approach comprising of nine middle age mothers living in the greater Dublin area with at least one child between the ages of nine and fifteen was adopted. And lastly a thematic analysis was employed with the aid of Nvivo.

Materials/Apparatus

A qualitative interview schedule comprising of fourteen questions was devised to guide the semi-structured interviews. Question areas included participant background information, children’s voices and participation in decision making, cultural and sporting activities, parent–child interaction and expressions of affection, conflict resolution and punishment, contact with extended family and general views on children’s rights. See Appendix 1 for the Interview Question Schedule. An information sheet and consent form was issued to participants in advance of the interviews to inform the participant of key messages. See Appendix 2 for the Information Sheet and Appendix 3 for the Consent Form. In relation to equipment, a dictaphone, model Olympus VN-750, Nvivo 9 and a password protected USB was used to record, analyse and store interviews.

Participants

In relation to the sample recruitment, a purposive sampling method was adopted to ensure the participants were suitable to address the research question. All participants engaged in the research voluntarily and the majority were sourced through work colleagues, family members and friends. However to make certain this method was not linked closely with non-probability sampling or convenience sampling, the researcher did not, to ensure a non-bias sample, interview anyone they knew. One participant was sourced through a Dublin parenting group online. The sample composition comprised of nine middle age mothers living in the greater Dublin area with a minimum of one child between the ages of nine and fifteen. Middle age in this study was defined as belonging to two different age brackets, 35-44 and 45-54 and all mothers ranged in age from 36 to 53. Mothers in this study were also characterised as living in a two parent household, the majority, seven married and two co-habiting, a relatively even breakdown, north and south, of locations, four living in a disadvantaged area and five not and an even mix of socio-economic groupings, four belonged to the professional and managerial classes and five the skilled non-manual classes. And lastly there was a broad mix in job status, the majority, five worked full-time, three part-time and one was self-employed and in relation to education level, the majority, six completed their leaving certificate, one left before completing second level and two completed third level.

Procedure

In regards to the sample recruitment two methods were used. Initially various parent groups in Dublin were contacted by email twice within a three week period but this resulted in a limited response and a second method was adopted. Parent groups that were contacted included the Dublin Parents Council of Ireland, Dublin County Childcare, Help me to Parent, Practical Parenting and Meet Mums, only two responded, Help me to Parent and Practical

Parenting which offered to promote the research on their website and Facebook page.

Unfortunately only one mother that participated in the research was sourced through this method. The second more successful method of recruitment adopted was sourcing middle age mothers through work colleagues, friends and family members. However the researcher did not, to ensure a non-bias sample, interview anyone they knew. These connections contacted potential participants directly giving only a brief outline of the research and the researcher followed up with an introductory email and an information sheet. Nine middle age mothers were sourced through this method and eight participated in this research.

Following on from the above, a pilot study was conducted in advance of the interviews and feedback was sought from two mothers who did not participate in this study. All interviews were held in mother's homes and took a maximum of forty minutes. Before the commencement of each interview written consent was obtained and important key messages reiterated. And lastly a conversational approach was applied and prompts were used but only with discretion.

Ethical Considerations

In relation to ethical considerations the procedures and guidelines of the DBS Research Ethics Committee for Good Research Practice underpinned this research. One ethical issue addressed was obtaining written consent prior to the beginning of each interview. Another issue was in relation to sensitive questions or possibility of the fear of social judgment, motivating mothers to under-report issues, such as physical punishment. This issue was addressed by informing parents in the information leaflet and the consent form they were free to withdraw from the process at any time. As well as this the interview was designed to enhance participant's comfort, in simple language beginning with general topics

and gradually finishing with more sensitive topics. Time and confidentiality were all also viewed as potential ethical issues in this research. As this study was aimed at mothers time out of one's daily routine could potentially cause distress, as a result interviews were conducted at the participants chosen location. In relation to confidentiality in order to ensure the identity of participants was protected at all times, participant's real names were not used, written consent was kept separate from the data, the researcher's laptop was password protected at all times and interview transcripts, consent forms, data files and tape recordings will be deleted within one year of the research. And lastly participants were verbally informed, if a child was deemed to be at risk, the researcher had a duty to refer the issue to their supervisor.

Data Analysis

And lastly in relation to the data analysis a thematic analysis was employed with the aid of Nvivo. Bryman (2008) argues that software such as NVivo encourages the researcher to become more connected with the data and to recognise possible links between themes through a process of 'trees' of reoccurring themes. Firstly the researcher began by immersing themselves in the data, through the collection and the careful transcription and secondly by generating initial codes in Nvivo, helping to organize the data into meaningful groups with some codes becoming main themes, sub-themes or discarded. And lastly the themes were reviewed and refined and a clear picture of the theories emerged, the summaries of which, are presented in the findings of this paper.

Results

Key findings were found and categorised into four main themes, children's voices and participation in family decisions, parental discipline strategies, general views on children's rights and children's general lifestyles relating to cultural and sporting activities, contact with extended family and expressions of love and affection.

Children's Voices and Participation in Family Decisions.

Mothers self-reported on the types, their feelings on and how their children participate in family decisions. An insight was also gained on children's general voices in the family. Overall all nine mothers reported, to some level, they had involved their children in family decisions in the last three years. Eleven types of decisions in total were reported and the highest listed were cultural and sporting activities, holiday destinations and location of secondary school. All mothers indicated that their children were involved in these decisions on a regular basis with the exception of decisions that are once off. Figure 1 illustrates the type of family decisions mothers reported including their children in over the last three years.

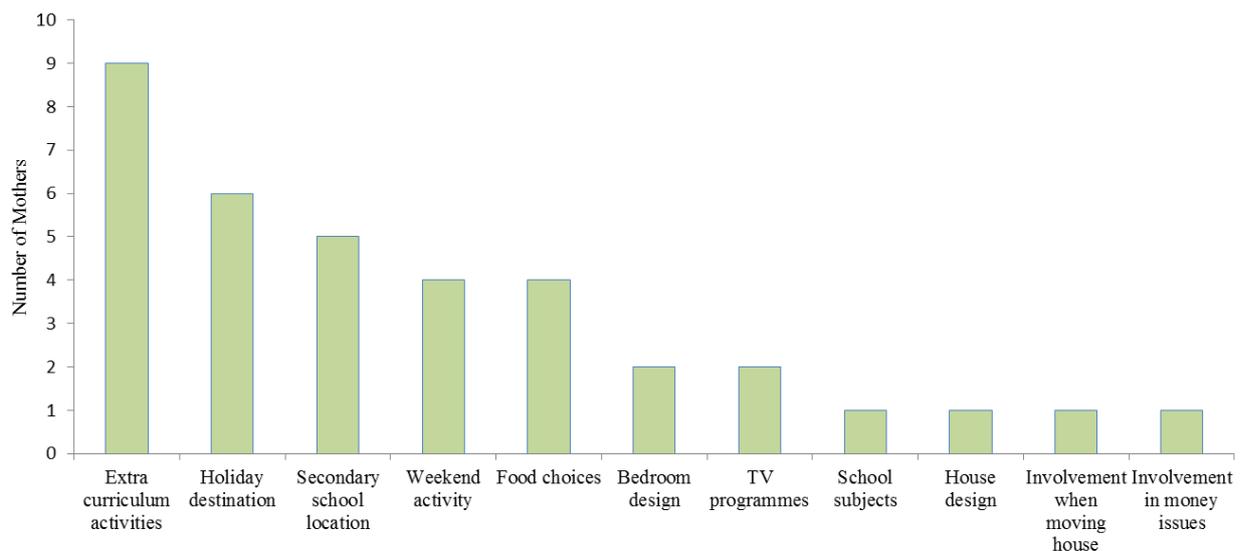


Figure 1: Types of Family Decisions and the number of Mothers who have included their Children in them over the last three years

Mothers were also asked their opinions and feelings on children being involved in the decision making process. Overall all nine mothers felt it was important and helpful to involve children in decision-making. In particular, four mothers mentioned it has helped to engage their co-operation. For example participant one stated getting a say in something “makes them happy to do it”, participant six believes involving them in decisions can encourage cooperation and prevent them from rebelling in the future and participant four mentioned it helped her to come to a final decision on reducing their extra curriculum activities and birthday celebrations and stated “they do know don’t ask me for anything because we are saving and we need to come together.” Three mothers mentioned it helps to empower them and encourage independence. For example participant seven stated it is about “enabling them”, participant two mentioned the importance of not allowing “decisions just being constantly made for you and you don’t have to think about them” and participant nine stated “it helps him feel more involved and in control.” A smaller minority of mothers mentioned other reasons. Two mothers commented on the old Dublin saying “children should be seen but not heard” and acknowledged the importance of the children having an opportunity to be heard. Two mothers mentioned the importance of letting them make mistakes. Participant seven stated the importance of needing to “experience the consequences of that decision and learn from it” and participant nine stated “once they get older you have to learn to pull back and say ok they don’t want to do this even if you know it is the right thing or whatever.”

However the majority, six mothers felt even though it was important to include them in decisions it was also important to still retain a level of control. Two mothers spoke about the importance of having the “final say”, three mothers about “knowing what is best” and one mother on need to have rules. In particular participant two stated “no I would believe I would

be the one making all the important decisions but if it was about on ice cream or a packet of crisps that's fine.....” A small minority of mothers, three mothers, spoke about decisions that children should not be involved in, in particular family disputes. Participant three stated “kids should be kids and that they don't need to worry about stuff like that” and participant one stated “children are involved in far too much” and “are talked to like they are adults”. And lastly only one mother commented on it being too hard and time consuming to include them in decisions all the time. Participant nine stated “a lot of the time we would make a decision and put it as a surprise...sometimes you just have to be a bit of a dictator otherwise nothing will get done and you wouldn't get out the door.”

An insight into how children participate in the decision making process was also gained. Overall all nine mothers reported adopting strategies that tried to include, give their child an input or say in certain decisions. The majority of mothers, six mothers reported compromising with their children especially in situations when their decisions are in conflict such as disagreeing over preference of school subjects, appropriate clothing, allowing more freedom to walk to places, a later bed time and going out to certain places. In particular, participant seven spoke about her disappointment when her daughter explained clearly and validly her reasons at fourteen why she didn't want to go to mass anymore. “I found really I was kind of confronted with a dilemma where I could force her to go to mass and destroy my relationship with her or respect her opinion.” Just under half, four mothers indicated adopting an approach that rationalised and explained decisions to their children, explaining why it had to be no. For example participant eight stated “I think it is better to explain stuff to them and even over explain stuff to them so they have it then and know why you're saying no.” A small number, two mothers reported using a guiding approach with their children. For

example participant nine stated that she would suggest and guide her children in deciding what to wear by narrowing down their choices.

And lastly to gain a further insight into children's participation and voices in the family, a clear effect emerged when mothers were asked if they sit down after a working day as a family and discuss their day's events. Significantly, all nine mothers reported asking their children everyday how their day in school was either by ringing their child after school, asking them directly when they come in or quizzing them during dinner. In particular, the majority, seven mothers spoke about the importance of having a family dinner or a supper daily together and all explained how beneficial it was in finding out how their children's day was. For example participant three mentioned "it is kind of an unwritten rule that we sit for meals together...and it is generally like how was school or you never guess what happened today...it just evolves, no one person dictates the conversation", participant six stated "you know it is the only time of day you get to chat together...it's great because you would say what did you do today at school or whatever and your yapping away", participant seven stated "it is the only place of the day that you keep in touch with yourself and you come together and see what everyone is doing" and participant eight stated that during dinner she encourages her children to tell her "whatever they want to tell me."

Parental Discipline Strategies

Mothers self-reported on the overall range of disciplinary strategies which they used on their children within the past three years. Nineteen strategies in total were found and presented in three categories non-aggressive discipline strategies, psychologically aggressive discipline strategies and physical punishment. A sight into mother's feelings on the use and the legislative position of physical punishment was also found. In relation to non-aggressive

discipline strategies, overall all nine mothers reported using these type of strategies with their children in the past year. Eight strategies in total were found. The most frequently adopted by all nine mothers was ‘taking things away’ and just under half, four mothers reported ‘changing the tone of their voice’ and ‘talking to them and tell them how they felt.’ Table 1 illustrates the type, how often and how many mothers have used non-aggressive discipline strategies in the past three years.

Table 1: Number of Mothers who have used Non-Aggressive Discipline Strategies in the past three years

| Non-aggressive discipline strategies | Often | Occasionally | Rarely |
|---|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Asking the Teacher for support | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Bold Step | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Denial of Treats | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Threatened to ground Child | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Not letting them go somewhere | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Taking things away | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Talking to them and tell them how you feel | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Changing the tone of your voice | 4 | 0 | 0 |

In relation to psychologically aggressive discipline strategies, the majority, five mothers, reported not using any of these type of strategies. However, just under half, four mothers did indicate that they had shouted or yelled at their child in the past year. Only three strategies in total were noted and used only, on a rare basis. Table 2 summarises the type, how often and how many mothers have used psychologically aggressive discipline strategies with their children in the past three years.

Table 2: Number of Mothers who have used Psychologically Aggressive Discipline Strategies in the past three years

| Psychologically aggressive strategies | Often | Occasionally | Rarely |
|--|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Ignoring the Child | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Roaring, shouting or screaming | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Threatening them | 0 | 2 | 1 |

Over half, two mothers that have used roaring and shouting as a strategy stated it was always counterproductive and it was only a way of venting your own frustration and made the child feel threatened. Participant nine said “to lose the rag they really just shut down” and participant seven stated “what I am finding is shouting never worked and shouting only ever meant I was shouting for help.”

In relation to physical punishment the majority, six mothers reported using it as a strategy within the last three years and only a minority, three mothers indicated they have never used physical punishment in parent-child conflict. Overall the use of this strategy was low as almost all, five mothers reported only using it rarely and all six mothers reported using less severe forms of physical punishment, such as ‘smacking, slapping or tapping a child on the bottom’. Six strategies in total were listed. Table 3 summarises findings on the type, how often and the number of mothers that have used physical punishment with their children in the past three years.

Table 3: Number of Mothers who have used Physical Punishment in the last three years

| Frequency of physical punishment | Often | Occasionally | Rarely |
|---|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Clatter across the back of the legs | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Slap or smack on the bottom | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Tap on the bottom | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Thump | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Clip on the ear | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Lash or slap across the hand | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Significantly, all the mothers that used physical punishment reported it had been used on them and the three mothers that never used it reported it was never used on them as children. Overall there was no socio – demographics trend reported on the mother’s use of physical punishment as two mothers who do not endorse it, live in what is deemed as a disadvantage area and two mothers who have used it, where the only mothers in this study educated to third level.

All mothers were also asked what their feelings and opinions were on the use of physical punishment. Almost all, five mothers, who have used physical punishment in the last three years stated they felt guilty, hated or regretted using it and they felt it only happen when they lost control and was never planned. In general, the majority, six mothers felt it was only a way of venting your own frustration. For example participant nine said “I think it is completely a waste of time, your venting your frustration and it is not fair on them. Because you are so much bigger”, participant six stated they “they push your buttons so far and you can see yourself starting to fly” and participant three believed “it would be so easy to lash out but who is that helping, me?” Almost all, six mothers stated it doesn’t work and that there is a better way of disciplining children. For example, participant eight said “sure if you’re hitting them you’re teaching them to hit. They’re going to be aggressive and violent to other people.” A smaller minority, three mothers believed it instilled fear in the child and only one

mother felt that this was not wrong. For example participant seven stated “you see the child and you see the fear in their eyes and you recognize it” and participant one said “I think that some kids need it because they don’t have that fear in them”. Very few, three mothers believed there is a need for it and felt a light “slap does not do the child any harm”. For example participant one said “When I look back if my mam and dad did not put a hand on me I would have done a lot more then I done” and participant six stated “You need something, it is alright for those people who say no no don’t do it, you just have to put them on the naughty step.”

And lastly mothers were also asked if they were aware of the current legislative position in Ireland on physical punishment and what their feelings and opinions were on Ireland banning physical punishment. In relation to the legal position, no clear consensus was found, three mothers were correct, three stated banned and three didn’t know. Overall the majority, six mothers believed it should be banned and only three mothers did not. Three reasons were identified against the banning of physical punishment, the belief you have “a right to slap your child”, it is “not up to any individual to tell you what you can do in your own family home” and “making it a law wouldn’t make a difference”. Significantly, three mothers supportive of a ban on physical punishment were reluctant, as they saw no harm with a light slap on the bum and only supported it in order to prevent the parents who go too far. For example participant nine stated

“I think in general, for god sake they are your kids do we really need to go through the whole thing of legislation.....Maybe there is people that would take advantage of the fact that it is legal and maybe if it was illegal the powers to be would have more control and power to intervene if there was an issue with a child been physically or sexually abused. So I suppose on balance yes even though I feel it is a bit nanny-ish.”

General Views on Children's Rights

Key findings were found on mothers' feelings and opinions on meaning and importance of the children's right concept. All mothers were asked if they had any understanding of the meaning of children's rights. The majority, seven mothers hesitated and felt they didn't know much about the concept or term. However when they began to explain in their own words all mothers were capable of listing several children's basic rights. The highest named was the right to protection and the second highest was the right to maintain contact with family noting mainly separation and adoption cases. A small minority of mothers mentioned the right to housing, warm food, education and to be loved. A significantly lesser minority, two mothers, both of who are the only two in this study educated to third level, reported a slightly stronger and more confident understanding of the concept. For example participant seven stated "it meant respecting them in every way, respecting them physically, verbally, culturally and creatively, being non-judgemental and teaching and listening to them" and participant nine briefly mentioned the recent legislative changes, the strengthening of children's rights in the constitution and also the new minister for children's future role.

As well as this all mothers were asked if they felt it was an important concept to them as a parent. In general, there was a strong consensus among the nine mothers they didn't feel it was a concept of high importance to them and it was clear that they don't think in a rights based approach when dealing with their children on a day to day basis. Mothers' comments included "it is not something they ever thought about" or has "come up for them" or that it is probably something that has been helpful from their children's point of view rather than their own. In particular two mothers reported there is no need for them to think in a rights based approach. Participant five felt "like kids are intuitive they just pick up what's right from

wrong.” and participant two said “they should have respect for others and they should know what they are supposed to do.” A small minority, three mothers did speak about the importance of teaching their children their rights but stated the main reason was for their protection against harm of sexual abuse.

Overall all nine mothers spoke only about the importance of the concept in terms of children who are in situations dealing with abuse and neglect rather than a concept being important for their own children. For example participant eight stated

“No I don’t think so from the rights point of view....I think you should just bring them up right in a loving home. If they’re getting abused well then they have rights but on an ordinary level.”

Participant three also stated “It is really important, like when you hear stories about children getting abused and they say years later that I didn’t know it was wrong.” And lastly, a small minority, three mothers did express their concerns regarding their children having a deeper knowledge and understanding, passed protection, of their rights. They felt it would infer and cause child-parent disagreements to become more challenging. Participant five stated her annoyance at the fact “my kids would threaten me with child line now” and participant eight said “knowing my son he would be coming up saying I have a right to this and that.” And lastly very few parents, only one mother, had stronger resentment towards the children’s rights concept, associating the concept with the legalizing of your child being allowed to be taken off you and stated “it is like they are seen to have more rights than they should have.”

Children’s General Lifestyles.

This section presents an overview of findings from mothers self-reports on children’s general lifestyles relating to cultural and sporting activities, contact with extended family and

expressions of affection and love. In relation to children’s cultural and sporting activities, mothers were asked if their children participated in any activities regularly. Overall all nine mothers reported, excluding children under the age of six, on average, their children are involved in a minimum of two different activities on a weekly basis. A high number, nineteen activities in total were found and the most popular activity was dancing and second was GAA. Figure 2 summarises findings on the type of activities and the number of children that are involved in them on a weekly basis.

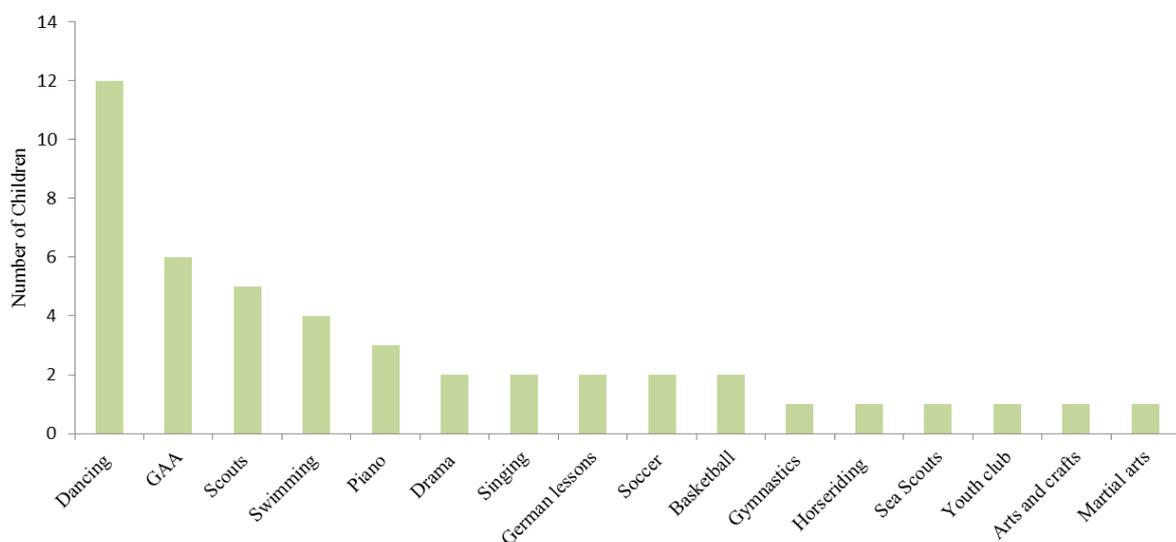


Figure 2: Types of Activities and the number of Children that are involved in them on a weekly basis

All mothers also reported on how their children became involved in as well as their opinions on the importance of, activities. Overall all nine mothers identified their children had become involved in the majority of the activities because they were either good at it or they liked, loved or were interested in the activity. For example reasons such as “they’re really good at singing and dancing”, “she loves sports” and “they both came looking for it” were reported by the majority. Significantly all nine mothers mentioned that they had allowed and would allow their children to drop out of activities if the child feels it is not for them

even it is against their wishes. For example participant six said “I never believed in your doing that because I wanted you to do it. I use to think sometimes I wasn’t pushy enough and I should have got them to do more sport but that’s not what they are” and participant eight said “I will push them whatever area they want to go into, support them, I am not going to force them.”

As well as the above a clear consensus emerged, all nine mothers felt it was extremely important for children to be involved in activities on a regular basis. In particular, over half, five mothers commented on the importance of children experiencing different things and trying everything. For example participant three stated “as a parent you want them to experience different things and see what’s out there.” Just under half, four mothers felt it improves their social life and a small majority, two mothers stated it helps them learn new skills and morals. However less than half, four mothers did mention some negative effects too. A small number, two mothers expressed their disappointment that children don’t play together outside their house anymore. For example participant nine stated “I like that social aspect. That is a big change and a big loss. Learning how to behave socially that is where they learn it not so much in a classroom or playground.” And lastly a small minority, three mothers mentioned money worries and time restraints and two mothers the inference with family dinners due to activities.

All mothers were also asked if their children maintained contact on a regularly basis with extended family and how important it was to them. Almost all, eight mothers stated that their children maintain close contact with their grandparents and the majority of their aunts, uncles and cousins on a regular basis. A small minority, only two mothers, one reporting only being in contact with one side and the other neither side, mentioned their extreme

disappointment that their extended family have no interest. Participant nine stated “They are not interested, it is really sad. I don’t want to expose them to people who don’t care about them.” Very few, only two mothers commented on the demands of their lives making it hard to see family regularly. Participant three stated “it is probably something I don’t do a lot especially in modern day society there is more demands on people’s lives and then extended family kind off slips away.” However it was significantly clear all nine mothers, although for different reasons, place a high value on children maintaining contact with extended family. In particular two mothers spoke about children needing someone close but different to speak too besides their parents and other mothers mentioned the importance of the immediate bond, feeling loved, valued and secure and participant nine believed “kids with good extended families and have the support...are better behaved and socially they are better.”

And lastly an insight into mothers expressions of affection and love on a weekly basis were reported in the findings too. Nine forms in total were mentioned. The majority, seven mothers reported using physical affection, ‘hugs’ on a regular basis and the second highest was verbal affection, saying ‘I love you’. Figure 4 summarizes the forms of affection and love and the number of mothers who use this on a weekly basis.

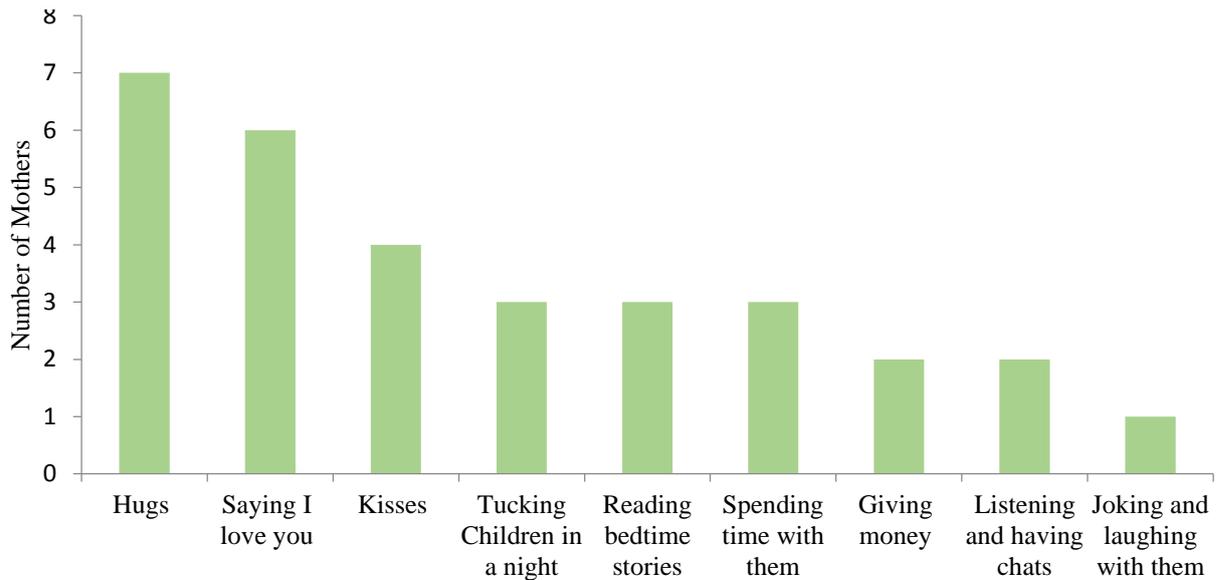


Figure 3: Forms of affection and number of mothers who use this on a weekly basis

In relation to “spending time with them”, and “listening and having chats” very few mothers identified this form as an expression of their love and affection. Two mothers mentioned the importance of just doing nothing and lying on the couch together and another two mothers on building in one to one time with each child. For example, participant three stated she does simple things like bringing one of her children on their own to drop books back in the library and participant seven mentioned bringing one child on their own for a small snack. Participant seven also stated she found spending one to one time “magical” and noticed her children “sat up taller” as they talked about their day. She further stated “I believe that this is how your self-worth is determined.”

Discussion

Children's rights is a relevantly new contemporary topic in Ireland. There are possibly many changes in the everyday lives of children linked with their political rights and there is a need for more research aimed at how the realization of children's rights and the legal changes are affecting how families function in the treatment of their children. The present study aims to address this gap and explore how Irish middle age mothers perceive children's rights by identifying mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children in the family. A further aim of the research is to identify mother's opinions on and awareness of, the concept of children's rights.

In order to identify mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children in the family unit, certain areas of children's everyday family life experiences were examined from a mothers perspective and key findings and themes emerged in children's voices and participation in decision making, parental discipline practices, cultural and sporting activities, contact with extended family and expressions of love and affection. Finally mother's opinions on and awareness of the concept of children's rights was also discovered.

Overall, findings in relation to decision making clearly point to the fact that all children are involved, to some level, in the family decision making process. All nine mothers clearly value the importance of their child's input, encourage children's participation by compromising, explaining and or guiding them in decisions and ensure they take their opinions on board. The importance placed by all nine mothers on listening to their children's voices was evident as all mothers ask their children everyday about school and almost all, seven mothers, place a high value on having a daily meal together to chat about their day. In Article 12 of the CRC it states when adults are making decisions that impact children, the

child has a right to say what they think and have their views taken into account. (Children's Rights Alliance, 2006, p. 99). The National Children's Strategy stated that to give a voice to children means encouraging them to express their opinions and demonstrating a willingness to listen and take them on board as well as explaining the final decisions especially when the child's opinion cannot be completely taken into account (DOHC, 2000, p. 30). It is evident from this study middle age mothers are meeting this right within the family and such findings are worth noting considering that effective participation in decision-making can be empowering and aid in building confidence and self-esteem in children (DOHC, 2006, p. 141).

The above findings are also in keeping with other recent Irish studies in the area. A high portion of children reported finding it easy to talk to their mother when they have a problem (DOHC, 2009, p. 84, DOHC, 2006, p. 46) and a high majority of parents spend time just talking with their children (DOHC, 2006, p. 52) and eating a main meal with them at a table several times a week (DOHC, 2006, p. 56). However the majority, six mothers did report the need to retain some level of control. This point is interesting considering much of the opposite regarding child's right has centralised around the category of self-assertive rights, the independence and autonomy of children's versus parents (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 7). Although it is important for parents to maintain a balance, this research would benefit from further in-depth study to address if these rights are still an on-going issue or struggle for parents in Ireland.

The findings also clearly point to the overall dominance of inductive discipline strategies, as they were the most frequently used by all nine mothers in this study. Three separate categories of discipline strategies were reported by mothers, non-aggressive,

psychologically aggressive and physical punishment strategies. In keeping with findings in recent Irish studies (DOHC, 2009) and UK studies (Ghate et al, 2003, Anderson et al, 2002) was the higher use of non- aggressive, inductive discipline strategies and the low and rare use of psychologically aggressive discipline strategies in this study. These findings are worth noting because there are positive connections between inductive discipline strategies like these and the child's ability to internalise good moral and social values (Holden, 2002). However, even though the use of psychologically aggressive strategies was low they can have possible negative outcomes for children and more research in Ireland is needed. As well as this the majority, six out of nine mothers reported using physical punishment as a strategy within the last three years however the frequency of use was relevantly low in line with other Irish research (DOHC, 2009). In comparison to this research a higher and clearer consensus did emerge with regard to mother's attitudes towards physical punishment as almost all, six out of nine mothers, felt it was unproductive and there were better methods to handling the situation and the majority, six mothers, supported a widespread ban on physical punishment. However three of these mothers did contain ambivalent feelings and only supported the ban out of fear that some parents will go too far.

Nevertheless the present study does indicate that mothers in Dublin are clearly more supportive of a ban on physical punishment and therefore, the acceptability of physical punishment as a strategy among parents in Ireland may need to be challenged. As well as this, research is needed to identify the challenges that a legal ban would possibly bring to Irish society considering there were underlining ambivalent feelings towards it. Mothers may resist external regulation even if they are not in favour of using it as a strategic choice. Overall it is evident from these findings that the majority of mothers prefer to use discipline strategies that are the least harmful and that encourage more positive outcomes for their child which is in

line with Article 19 of CRC which states that children have the right to be cared for properly and protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents (Children's Rights Alliance, 2006, p. 99).

Significant findings were also found in relation to other areas of children's general lifestyles in sport and cultural activities, contact with extended family and expressions of love and affection. Overall the majority, nine mothers, place a high importance on children experiencing and participating in a range of cultural and sporting activities. All children in this study over the age of five participated in a minimum of two activities a week and this high participation rate is in line with other Irish studies. It was reported in 2002 that 87.4% of children were physically active at least one hour, two days a week (DOHC, 2006, p. 192) and in 2009, although slightly lower, it was reported three-quarters of nine-year olds were involved in an organised sports club and nearly half involved in structured cultural activities (DOHC, 2009, p. 128). This finding is worth noting considering participation in regular physical activities contributes to an improved quality of life, physically and mentally for children (DOHC, 2006, p. 190). Activities were also found to be highly child centred. Overall all mothers reported giving their child the freedom and independence to choose their activities as well as to drop out if it did not suit the child. It is evident that children had the right and the ability to create their own identity in this study and mothers are meeting their right as outlined in article 31 of the CRC, to relax, play and join in a wide range of leisure and recreational activities (Children's Rights Alliance, 2006, p. 99).

Following on from the above, findings were also found in relation to contact, overall all nine mothers put a high emphasis on their children maintaining contact with extended family. Only two mothers reported their children do not see certain family members but the

reason was due to their extended family not wanting to be involved. However this research did not deal with single or divorced mothers or adopted children and further research into parents understanding of and treatment of their children in this area is needed. And lastly all nine mothers reported expressing love and affection regularly to their child. Overall nine mothers reported physical affection as the highest form in particular hugging their children and the second highest was verbal affection, saying 'I love you'. This finding is worth noting in light of the fact that children who receive sensitive, warm care from their mothers on a regular basis are more likely to be emotionally secure and confident (DOHC, 2009, p. 40). However interestingly very few mothers reported spending time, listening and having chats with their child as a form of affection and love and this research could benefit from further detailed investigation into how mothers view the concept of affection and love. Nevertheless it is evident as outlined mainly in Article 9, 10 and 19 of the CRC, middle age mothers are meeting their child's right to regular access and contact with their family and to be loved and cared for. (Children's Rights Alliance, 2006, p. 99).

And lastly, overall the majority, seven mothers in total, felt they knew very little about the children's rights concept and the two mothers who had a stronger understanding were the only two in this study educated to third level. These findings are in line with other research which believes there is a general lack of awareness of the CRC and children's rights among children and the public in Ireland (Children's Rights Alliance, 2006, p. 12). However mother's common sense assumptions listed several children's basic rights, notably the highest listed was the right to protection and the category of self-assertive rights were the least mentioned. This could further support the notion that Ireland still continues to view children in a welfare based approach in need of protection rather than a right's based approach (Hayes, 2002, Kilkelly, 2008). However as this study has shown, the majority of mothers perform

efficiently in meeting their children's rights so it could be purposed, that on some unconscious level the legal changes and the recognition of children's rights has influenced them in their understanding of and treatment of their children or alternatively that mothers are meeting their children's rights without having much understanding, therefore challenging the notion of the need for a rights based approach at all. No formal evaluation has been undertaken on the level of awareness or impact of the CRC or children's rights among children and the public in Ireland (Children's Rights Alliance, 2006, p. 12) and it is evident from the above further research is critical if Ireland is to achieve the full recognition of children's rights into Irish law.

Following on from the above all nine mothers reported that they do not think in a rights based approach and feel there is no need for it when dealing with their children. Interestingly three mothers felt that children viewing themselves in terms of rights would only cause disagreements to become more challenging and three mothers emphasised the importance of teaching their children their rights but only in terms of their protection, from child abuse. This finding is significant as it further emphasises the above point that parents in Irish society still find it easier to view children's rights in terms of protection rather than the more challenging category of self-assertive rights (Kilkelly, 2008, p. 8). If Ireland wants to move from a welfare based approach to a rights based approach in thinking about children it is evident there is still a lot to do in educating and teaching parents on the concept of children's rights and a large scale campaign to raise the awareness of children's rights is also needed. The Children's Rights Alliance (2006) stated that progress not only involves constitutional reform but the role of the government in fostering societal awareness of children as rights-holders. "In order for children's rights to be made real, they must become part of society's vision for itself" (p. 12). Research is also needed to identify the potential

challenges and opposition Ireland may face from parents in the future in achieving the full recognition of children's rights into law.

Finally a major limitation of this study is that it only deals with a small sample of Irish mothers, from a specific age group with similar social class backgrounds and in a certain location. It would be extremely difficult to generalise these findings onto the mothers and parents of Ireland. Further research is needed to investigate parent's perspectives on children's rights and their own understandings of and treatment of their children from different social class backgrounds, father's points of view, among ethnic minority parents and parents rearing their children in different family and social contexts in Ireland such as single parent families. This area of inquiry would also benefit from larger scale qualitative research exploring a range of issues in-depth, the meaning that discipline has for parenting and the parent-child relationship, the ambivalent attitudes that parents have towards banning physical punishment, children's involvement in decision-making at each stage of their childhood, children's perspectives and knowledge on their rights and the connection between the recognition of children's political rights and parents treatment of their children.

In conclusion it is evident from this study that middle age mothers understanding of and treatment of their children is closely in line with the children's rights concept. Mothers have huge respect and value for their children across all areas of their lives ensuring they have a right to have their voices heard by including them in the family decision-making process, a right to protection by using forms of discipline that are less harmful, a right to create their own identity by offering a huge range of cultural activities, a right to contact with family, ensuring they see their extended family on a regular basis and a right to be cared for and loved by expressing their affections physically and verbally on a regular basis. However

it is also evident that there is a lack of conceptual awareness of children's rights among middle age mothers and they do not view their children in a rights based approach.

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Appendix 1: Qualitative Interview Schedule.

Questions named ‘a’, ‘b’, etc. below is the main question to be asked. Questions named ‘i’, ‘ii’, etc. are only to be used as prompts when necessary.

1. Background information on participating households.

- a. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your family?
 - i. Age?
 - ii. Marital status? i.e. married, single, etc.
 - iii. Education level?
 - iv. Job title?
 - v. Job status i.e. part-time, full-time, self-employed etc.
 - vi. Are both parents working in the household?
 - vii. What part of Dublin do you live in?
 - viii. Place of birth?
 - ix. How many children do you have and what are their ages?

2. Children’s voices and participation in decision making.

- a. Can you recall any situation’s in the last three years in your family where your children have been involved in making family decisions? And if so what have they been and how often do they participant?
 - i. Have your children every participated in making decision’s regarding their education, such as where they go to school or where they go on family outings etc?
- b. What are your feelings on children been involved in family decisions?

- i. By involving your children in family decisions did you feel it helped or hindered you in coming to a final decision? Can you explain how and why?
- c. After a working day, as a family, would you every sit down and have a family discussion on your day events? If so, what would that conversation sound like and how often does it happen?

3. Cultural and sporting activities.

- a. What cultural and sport activities, if any, are your children involved in and how often do they participate?
- b. How did your children become involved in these activities and do you feel it is important?

4. Parent–child interaction and expressions of affection?

- a. How do you express your affection and love with your child on a weekly basis?

5. Conflict resolution and punishment?

- a. What styles and discipline strategies do you use with your children and how often?
 - i. Have you ever used physical punishment and if so, what types and how often?
- b. What are your feeling and opinions on physical punishment?
- c. Are you aware the current legislative/legal position on physical punishment in Ireland at the moment?

- d. What is your opinion and feelings on Ireland potential banning physical punishment in a family setting in the future?

6. Contact with extended family members?

- a. What is your opinion and feelings on children maintaining contact with extended family members? For example grandparents, aunties, cousins, siblings?
 - i. Do you have any extended family members who do not live close by?

7. General views on children's rights?

- a. Do you understand what children's rights mean and if so, could you explain in your own words a little about it?
- b. How important are children's rights to you as a parent?

Appendix 2: Information Sheet



Hi there,

Who is the researcher?

I am a thirty year old part-time 4th year student in Dublin Business School finishing a BA in Social Science.

What am I trying to do?

I am presently doing my Thesis and it is aimed at gaining a middle age mothers perspective on children's rights within Irish families. In brief, I am trying to gain a mother's insight into children's everyday lifestyles.

Questions that will be asked?

General Background information? Children's voices and participation? Children's cultural and sporting activities? Parent-child interaction and expressions of affection? Conflict resolution and punishment? Contact with extended family members? General views on children's rights in Ireland?

Interview and general details?

- The interview will take place at the participants choosing and take no longer than 40min's.
- Written consent will be obtained prior to commencement of the interview and the interview will be tape recorded. Direct quotes may be used but real names will not be mentioned in the research report.
- As the data is anonymous at all times, participants will not be able to withdraw their data once it is submitted.
- The participant is free to withdraw from the interview at any time.
- All results obtained are strictly confidential and is done for the purpose of meeting course requirements but if a child is deemed to be at risk the issue needs to be reported to their supervisor.
- Efficient procedures will be in place for the storage and destruction of data. For example, interview transcripts, consent forms and tape recordings will be deleted and shredded within one year of the research report submitted date.

Contact Details?

Researcher: Ashling Kennedy. **Email:** ashlingkennedy2010@gmail.com. **Phone:** 0861742635.

THANK YOU! I HOPE YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING

Appendix 3: Consent Form



Title: Middle Age Mother's Perspectives on Children's Rights within Irish Families.

My name is Ashling Kennedy and I am conducting research which is aimed at gaining a middle age mothers perspective on children's rights within Irish families.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves an interview that will take roughly 40 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary, so you are not obliged to take part. If you do take part you are free to withdraw at any time.

Participation is confidential. If, after the interview has been completed, you wish to have your interview removed from the study this can be accommodated up until the research study is published.

The interview will be tape recorded and direct quotes may be used but real names will not be mentioned.

The interview, and all associated documentation, will be securely stored on a password protected computer.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the interview that you are consenting to participate in the study.

Should you require any further information about the research, please contact Ashling Kennedy (ashlingkennedy2010@gmail.com) or the student's supervisor Dr Niall Hanlon (niall.hanlon@dbs.ie). Thank you for participating in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____