



The Effects of Pending Redundancy on Construction Workers in Ireland

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine what effects the experience of pending redundancy within the construction sector would have on the workers lives. The sample consisted of 120 office and site based construction workers from one company in Ireland. Quantitative analysis was used to determine the findings between the office and site based staff in terms of their job satisfaction, their overall satisfaction with life, perceived stress levels and their total self-esteem. The overall findings indicate that male and female workers with the construction company experience much higher levels of stress than what is perceived to be normal by Cohen (1983). Overall the study found that females had a slightly higher level of stress compared to their male colleagues. Females are also less likely to be made redundant within the company. The higher the educational attainment a person has the less likely they are to be made redundant. Females on average have a higher education attainment than male workers. Further findings suggest that overall both male and female workers were only slightly satisfied with life while working with the construction sector. From the results it is clear that the employee's job satisfaction will progressively go up with longer years of employment. Further analysis suggests that overall office based workers have a higher satisfaction with life than that of site based workers. The study suggests that the participants of this study have above average self-esteem levels. But may be subject to change over the course of time according to (Steiger., Allemand., Robins & Fend, 2014)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For most of us, work occupies the majority of our lives, it gives us structure and purpose on a daily basis and most importantly, give us a daily routine. Without it we become different people. According to Burdorf (2008. p, 81) there is ample evidence to suggest that inconsistent labour force participation is an important determinant of health inequalities, as demonstrated by higher morbidity and mortality among unemployed people. Poor health may increase when unemployment is actual and when faced with the probability of becoming unemployed the same is also true. Burdorf (2008. p, 82) suggests that the relationship between health and the type of employment a person becomes engaged in is an extremely important area for further research since the mechanisms in which they are linked to health are only partially understood. There is emerging evidence to suggest that employees in permanent jobs founded upon a volatile job market are associated with poorer health and may often lead to a vicious cycle of further unemployment throughout one's life. It can be said that the objective threat and uncertainty of security of employment can lead employees into a state of expectant redundancy that arguable manifests as a "pending-redundancy" mode of thinking. It is this pending redundancy mode that is seen to be decreasing job satisfaction in employees, negatively affecting life satisfaction, increasing stress levels and having a significant negative effect on levels of self-esteem.

The Importance of being employed

Work occupies the largest part of our lives. We do not only depend on it for our livelihoods, *“it can and does shape our physical and emotional health. It shapes our identities and environment and locates us in social hierarchies”*. (Share., Corcoran., & Conway, 2012. p, 116). Undoubtedly unemployment will have negative consequences to one’s life as it is an essential part of human existence.

Research conducted by McGann, Moss, & White (2012. p, 8) has explored the consequences of uncertainty in the work place and found that this can lead to significant negative impact on an employee’s health, sense of wellbeing and can also result in lower social status and increased insecurities. The research argues the point that unpredictable earnings can mean constant anxiety about meeting financial obligations. This in turn may also destabilize the workers ability to fulfil social roles, for example, being the provider of the family or household. McGann et al (2012) argues that in the long term uncertainty about one’s income may affect a person’s quality of life in older age because it hinders early financial retirement planning.

Karl Marx (1970, 1975) has described the importance of employment to human beings, it is what separates us from the animal world and is something that should not be overlooked on a multitude of levels.

“The human species is different from all other animal species, not because of its consciousness but because it alone produces its own means of subsistence. This uniquely human attribute also provides the medium through which individuals can realize their true potential as humans: in short, the arena of productive activity, the world of work, incorporates the secret of human nature”.(Grint, 2005, p. 86).

Unemployment in Ireland

Sang, Ison & Dainty (2009) suggest there is evidence that people who work with the construction industry are exposed to a number of stressors such as lack of job security which negatively impacts stress levels, job satisfaction, self-esteem and life satisfaction. The Irish construction sector is renowned for fluctuations in its levels of employment rising significantly and falling sharply in line with the economy. Arguably, one can consider a construction industry job to be a temporary job for the most part, bringing about massive peaks in uncertainty to the majority of its employees when the economy starts to decline. During the 1990's Ireland witnessed the beginnings of the "Celtic Tiger", the roots of what was to become Ireland's finest economic growth years and impressive economic success. No longer was Ireland a struggling country on the tip of Western Europe it was a country to be admired for its significant turnaround in fortune. Ireland had a competitive economy, relatively low labour costs, an educated work force and a favourable tax regime which attracted industries and offered genuine growth prospects especially when we look at the employment growth in the construction industry. However, in a dramatic turn of events brought about by the banking crisis and the mismanagement of the country's finances, Ireland descended into a downward spiral of economic depression during the latter half of 2008 which had the effect of decimating employment in the construction sector. The unemployment rate within this sector which had been at an all-time low during the Celtic Tiger years, dramatically began to increase once more with calamitous consequences forcing many out of employment and so many others driven to emigration and in some cases complete despair. Those employees within the construction industry fortunate enough to have current employment will likely have been made redundant in the past or at the very least, have been faced with the prospects of redundancy in some form. Again, further strengthening

the argument that employees within the construction industry are working in a state of constant flux and objective threat of job security.

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2001. P, 23) the number of construction workers in Ireland more than halved between April 2006 when it employed 170,523 persons, to 75,453 in April 2011, a decrease of 55.8% with almost all of it being male workers at 98.5% and 1.5 % being female. From the figures above we can see that the construction industry has taken a massive hit with unemployment, this coupled with the fact that the remaining workers are faced with a job that is uncertain at the best of times, and further layoffs in the future are something that many of them struggle to cope with.

The current uncertainty within the construction industry and mass unemployment rates of ex-construction workers is giving rise to a whole host of problems to those individuals left working in the construction industry. Many of these people appear to be facing notable obstacles in terms of overall life satisfaction, job satisfaction, stress and poor levels of self-esteem that they have never experienced to this extent before. Noting that most of the research in this field relates to unemployment once it has already happened, this study will endeavour to explore the effects of the objective threat of the uncertainty of employment in terms of pending redundancy on construction workers in Ireland and its impact on job satisfaction, life satisfaction, stress levels and self-esteem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Previous Research

Previous research focussing on the area of unemployment has mainly concentrated on the effects of unemployment once it has occurred versus the effects of pending unemployment on employees that may be facing redundancy or employees that simply face an uncertain future and lack of job security due to the sector that they work in. The construction industry is one such sector that has been significantly affected by very high unemployment rates. Traditionally, the construction industry has long been dominated by male workers due to its very nature. As a result of unemployment, many men find themselves jobless, their roles within society have fragmented and some men have even experienced a complete gender role reversal with their wives/partners having to become the chief bread winner in a household when unemployment strikes. This type of situation can cause a serious threat to a man's sense of job and life satisfaction, sense of self-esteem and overall mental wellbeing. Existing research has suggested that the effects of mental health associated with unemployment for both males and females are related to different positions or roles they play within society, each have their own psychological and economic need for employment. (Strandh., Hammarstrom., Nilsson., Nordenmark., Russel, 2013)

Historically within traditional nuclear families in Ireland, the man has been the main provider for the family, although this has changed in recent years as more women enter into the workforce, men still have a psychological need hard wired into their brain that pushes them towards wanting to be the main provider. Bryan (2013. p, 72) states that when "*job markets do not support full employment; the workforce participation of these men is adversely affected*". In turn it puts more pressure on fathers to fulfil the bread-winner role,

despite more social pressure on fathers to become more involved in parenting. According to Bryan (2013) this arrangement has challenged the breadwinning role of the husband.

Unemployment in Ireland has seen a dramatic increase. Since 2006 the male unemployment rate has risen from 106,633 to 274,327 in 2011 which is an increase of 157.3 per cent. This has resulted in a male unemployment rate of 22.3 per cent. Female unemployment however has been considerably less. In 2006 the figures stood at 72,823 and rose to 150,516 in 2011. This has resulted in a female unemployment rate of 15 per cent. (CSO census figures, 2011. p, 15)

Job Satisfaction

The issue of job security and indeed job insecurity is inexplicably linked with job satisfaction. The issue of job security has been in the spotlight over the past two decades and never more so than in the last few years in Ireland. Many organisations are struggling for survival, they are faced with the necessity of making their organisation the most effective and efficient model they can, the ultimate effect of which is to implement cost saving measures which often translates into widespread redundancy. Employees have witnessed the negative effects of this type of streamlining by organisations first hand. Unsurprisingly, this results in problems and insecurities among employees and has led to many research studies within the area. *“The fear of job loss damages the health of employees and reduces the productivity in firms”*. (Duncan, 1961) as cited in (Erlinghagen, 2008. 9, 183).

Research was carried out by Erlinghagen, (2008) to examine self-perceived job insecurity. The analysis was based around data collected from the European Social Survey (ESS) between 2004 and 2005. Individuals were surveyed using standardised questionnaires resulting in a raw data set containing over 13,207 individual participants across 17 ESS

countries. Upon examining the results the researcher found evidence to suggest that older workers were more affected by job insecurities than that of younger people. Further findings suggest that feelings of insecurity decline with increased qualifications. Good health is also negatively associated with self-perceived job insecurities. The research found that when people have been unemployed once before it is positively correlated with the likelihood the employee will report an insecure employment relationship. Erlinghagen, (2008. p, 183) states *“paid work is of fundamental importance in modern societies. For individuals it serves not only to provide them with a means of substance but also plays an important structuring role in status attribution, since the individual’s occupation is associated with the allocation of social prestige”*. Individuals therefore endeavour to remain in gainful employment continuously, and to keep unavoidable career interruptions as short as possible.

Cuyper., Witte., Vander., & Handaja, (2010) conducted research on the objective threat and uncertainty of unemployment following a restructuring of a Belgian service organisation. A sample of 330 Dutch speaking workers was sought. Some of which had already been told their jobs were safe while others were informed of their dismissal, the rest were still awaiting a decision. Out of the 330 workers who were posted questionnaires to their home address only 129 were completed and returned the forms. Cuyper et al (2010) suggest the results were as expected, there was a positive correlation between objective threat and unemployment and perceived job security within the workers who were informed about dismissal. Uncertainty was very high among the workers who were still awaiting a decision. But there was low objective threat of unemployment in the workers who had been informed that their jobs would be safe.

As cited in Erlinghagen, (2008. p, 183) *“Self perceived job insecurity can in principal give rise to a number of negative consequences in various areas of social life”*.

Physical and mental illnesses occur as the stress related consequences of feelings of uncertainty. (Ashford., Lee., & Bobko, 1989)

Satisfaction with Life

Previous research studies seek to gain knowledge regarding the impact on an individual's happiness levels when they become unemployed during their working life. According to Chadic, (2010) unemployment and quality of life in general affect different people in different ways. In general, researchers tend to cluster all persons together within their findings. This researcher offers a new perspective when looking at happiness and quality of life when unemployed. The empirical analysis draws on data from the German Socio Economic Panel (GSOEP) from 1994 to 2007 and was restricted to persons of working age, 18 to 65 both male and female. The researcher segregated the findings into two groups, the people who were actively looking for work "involuntary unemployment" and people who were not actively looking for work "voluntary unemployment". Chadi, (2010. P, 323) suggests all unemployed people will suffer from some level of unhappiness, but the differences are vast when compared to one another. In particular, those with the greatest level of willingness to work will suffer on a large scale. When compared to those who are not actively looking for work. Chadi, (2010. P, 323) argues "*there is a considerable positive effect on unemployed individuals who reveal no willingness to work*". The researcher concludes "*this unemployment induced unhappiness is consequently even stronger than determined by previous studies that have not considered the willingness to work factor*".

Anaf., Baum., Mewman., Ziersch., & Jolley, (2013) conducted research to ascertain what the mental health consequences of job loss would be. The researchers conducted two waves of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a sample of 33 out of 1000 individual

workers who lost their jobs at Mitsubishi Motors in South Australia during 2004 and 2005 as a result of the company's restructuring process. Qualitative interviews were conducted and thematic analysis was employed to determine the health consequences of job loss. The main themes that emerged from this research were, stress, loss of self-esteem, financial strain, shame and loss of status and perceived loss of control of one's life. The results were broken down into how the individuals were feeling about unemployment. Two of the workers reported that they no longer felt stressed. Another three workers reported having more flexibility and more time to spend with their children. The researcher explains that these results are supported by Hanisch, (1999) showing that job loss will eventually be viewed by some workers in a more positive light, thus facilitating a change in career and life direction, as cited in Anaf et al (2013. P, 4). However, this paper also shows extremely negative effects associated with unemployment. Many respondents reported a range of negative feelings including feelings of depression. At the extreme end, two of the respondents reported such negative feelings that they encountered suicidal tendencies.

Tracy aged 31, a production worker reported that it was a very depressing place to work sometimes. Tracy states from the day she started working there, people were telling her the factory was going to close. Eight years later it finally did. (Anaf et al. 2013. p, 4). Raymond aged 51, a maintenance worker reports the media were spreading rumours of the factory closing before the CEO of the company had a chance to announce it. When the CEO finally did Raymond reports that the news hit a lot of people very hard and a lot of workers were emotionally unstable. (Anaf et al. 2013. p, 5). Doreen aged 59, a canteen worker reports a feeling out of her life being out of control. When looking for work Doreen felt very frustrated when potential employers did not respond to her letters. She reported a feeling of frustration and despair. (Anaf et al. 2013. p, 6)

The research explains threatened unemployment is a chronic health stressor which can be seen in the industrialised countries since the 1990's due to economic and labour market changes. The research defines stress as a “*state of mental, emotional, or other strain*”. (Anaf et al. 2013. P, 7).

Stress

Selye, (1973. P, 692) defines stress as “*the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it*”. According to Knabe & Ratzel (2011. p, 4) the fear of becoming unemployed in the future is destructive to a person's subjective wellbeing and individual life satisfaction; the researchers have called this the “scarring effect”. The research outlines two main themes that have been identified.

(1) Genuine Scarring; past unemployment scars directly, it reduces current wellbeing both for currently unemployed persons and also for persons who have become reemployed in the meantime holding a person's future employment prospects constant.

(2) Scarring; the prospect of being unemployed in the future is frightening and reduces current wellbeing for those currently employed and unemployed.

Furthermore, the results of this research provides overwhelming evidence that employed individuals will suffer from greater stress in their lives and a much lower level of life satisfaction if they feel they are faced with unemployment in the near future.

There has been a large amount of literature in the context of economics when looking at the effects of job loss on individuals; however there has been considerably less research carried out on the effects of past unemployment and the psychological effects it may have on the individual. Clark., Georgellis., & Sanfey, (2000) conducted research to see what the psychological impacts of past unemployment may be. Clark, et al. (2000) looked at two

relatively unexplored ideas using data collected from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP). The first was to explore whether or not past unemployment reduces the current wellbeing of the individual. The second was to explore whether the time frame of the unemployment had an impact on the individual. The findings of the research were clear; current unemployment experienced by the individual are associated with lower levels of wellbeing, past unemployment also reduced the current wellbeing of the individual when he/she is in employment. Clark, et al. (2000) suggests that there is a fear of future unemployment with those who have experienced it before thus causing life satisfaction to drop.

Psychologically, people suffering from stress are pre-disposed to impaired levels of thinking. Those that suffer from stress can also suffer with anxiety; often stress leads to anxiety and even depression. It is well known that these conditions are not mutually exclusive which is of grave concern when we look at these conditions in the context of workplace safety, particularly given the amount of resources that are dedicated to ensuring health and safety at work in the construction industry.

Self Esteem

“The most basic task for one’s mental, emotional and social health, which begins in infancy and continues until one dies, is the construction of his/her positive self-esteem”. (Macdonald, 1994, p, 19) as cited in (Mann., Hosman., Schaalma & de Vries, 2004).

Research was carried out by Kinnunen., Feldt., & Mauno, (2003) to explore the “*cross-lagged*” relationship between job insecurity and self-esteem. The study consisted of 457 Finnish employees during a one year period from 1999 and 2000. The researchers collected their data using quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires. The results of

this research supported the hypothesis that job insecurity will ultimately have a negative effect on one's self esteem. In addition, the research results found that high job insecurity seemed to predict subsequent low self-esteem, but at the same time, and to the same extent, low self-esteem seemed to predict subsequent high job insecurity. The research concluded that the subject of work is crucial to one's self esteem throughout life.

Health education research carried out by Man., Hosman., Schaalma., & de Vries, (2004) stresses the importance of having high self-esteem within human beings, it is vital to mental wellbeing, happiness, success, social behaviour and satisfaction with life. Findings of the research also suggest that a high self-esteem is also associated with the aiding of recovery after severe disease. Also people have a need to think positively about themselves to improve their self-esteem. *"Self-esteem represents a motivational force that influences perceptions and coping behaviour. In the context of negative messages and stressors, positive self-esteem can have various protective functions"*. Mann et al. (2004. p, 7) as defined by the research self-esteem can be said to serve as a defence mechanism to protect internal balance.

On the other hand poor self-esteem is associated with a range of negative problems such as, eating disorders, behavioural problems, depression, suicidal tendencies, and anxiety. According to Mann et al. (2004. p, 3) development of self-esteem within children is particularly important; this is undoubtedly dependent on social factors within the child's life, i.e. whether they receive support from their family, especially their parents, and friends. *"Attachment and unconditional parental support are critical during the phases of self-development"* (Mann et al. 2004. p, 3)

The research concludes that self-esteem plays a vital part in human life, with poor self-esteem laying the foundation for social problems, diminished self-appreciation, self-defeating attitudes and psychiatric vulnerability.

Overall the majority of research published surrounding the effects of unemployment have been conducted once unemployment had already occurred. The findings of such studies have found there to be a positive correlation between unemployment and anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and diminished mental health. (Artazcoz., Benach., Borrell & Cortes, 2002).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aims and Objectives

The objective of this research is to explore the effects of pending redundancy on construction workers in Ireland in the context of the negative effects it can have on an individual's job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, stress levels and levels of self-esteem. Whilst there has been extensive research in the area of unemployment, research concerning pending redundancy remains comparatively limited. The purpose of this particular piece of research is to examine the level of an individual's job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, stress levels and levels of self-esteem among male and female office and site based staff within a construction company in Ireland and the effects of pending redundancy on individual's job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, stress levels and levels of self-esteem.

The research focused on the following areas; the levels of job satisfaction of employees within the construction company, their satisfaction with life, their perceived stress levels and their levels of self-esteem. In particular, the first aim of this study was to identify if office staff or site based staff had a higher level of perceived job satisfaction on the basis of perceived job security. The second aim of this study was to identify if males or females had a higher level of life satisfaction. The third aim of this study was to ascertain if office staff or site based staff had a higher perceived stress rate when faced with pending redundancy. The fourth aim of the study was to establish if office or site based staff had higher levels of self-esteem.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 – Job Satisfaction:

H¹: There will be differences in perceived levels of job satisfaction among office and site based staff

H⁰: There will be no differences in perceived levels of job satisfaction among office and site based staff

Hypothesis 2 – Satisfaction with Life:

H¹: There will be differences in life satisfaction among male and female staff

H⁰: There will be no differences in life satisfaction among male and female staff

Hypothesis 3 – Stress:

H¹: There will be differences in stress levels among office and site based staff

H⁰: There will be no differences in stress levels among office and site based staff

Hypothesis 4 – Self Esteem:

H¹: There will be differences in self-esteem levels among office and site based staff.

H⁰: There will be no differences in self-esteem levels among office and site based staff.

Research Methods

Materials

A questionnaire booklet was compiled consisting of four separate questionnaires (Appendix 1). (1) Measuring job satisfaction (MSQ-SF; Weiss, Davis, England & Lofquist, 1967). (2) Measuring satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin 1985). (3) Measuring stress, Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983) and (4) Measuring self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Job Satisfaction

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ-SF; Weiss, Davis, England & Lofquist, 1967) was used to measure an employee's satisfaction with his or her present job. The MSQ-SF provides detailed information on the aspects of their current job that the individual finds rewarding more so than general measures of job satisfaction according to (Rentsch & Steel, 1992). According to Weiss et al. (1967, p. 6) the most significant way of interpreting the MSQ-S scores is by giving percentage marks. Ordinarily a percentage score of 25 or lower would indicate a low level of job satisfaction, while a score of 75 or above would represent a high level of job satisfaction. The questionnaire is self-administered and consisted of 20 questions in total using 3 scales; The Intrinsic Satisfaction scale evaluates job satisfaction that comes from the inherent aspect of the job. The Extrinsic Satisfaction scale assesses the fulfilment one can get from external aspects of the job. The General Satisfaction scale measures the individuals overall job satisfaction, which is a combination of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic scales

Satisfaction with Life

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a short questionnaire consisting of 5 questions in total designed to measure one's satisfaction with his or her life as a whole. The participants indicated how much they agree or disagree with each of the 5 items using a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree. Diener, et al. (1985) state the scores should be added together to give a total and the following cut off points should be followed. (1) Between 31-35 = Extremely satisfied. (2) Between 26-30 = Satisfied. (3) Between 21-25 = Slightly satisfied. (4) 20 = Neutral. (5) Between 15-19 = Slightly dissatisfied. (6) Between 10-14 = Dissatisfied. (7) Between 5-9 = Extremely dissatisfied.

A score between 30-35 suggests the respondents are highly satisfied with life whereas a score of 5-9 suggests respondents are extremely dissatisfied.

Stress

Sheldon Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was used in the study to measure the perception of stress in the participant's life within the last month. This scale is designed to ascertain how uncontrollable and overloaded respondents find their lives at the time of the study. It consists of 10 questions and uses a 4 point Likert scale ranging from 0 being never to 4 being very often. According to Sheldon Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale scores are obtained by reverse coding 7 items, only then can one obtain an accurate score, with a higher score indicating higher perceived stress and a lower score suggests lower perceived stress levels. (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983).

Self-Esteem

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale questionnaire was used to identify the respondents self esteem at the time of the study taking place. It is used to measure self esteem as a positive or negative orientation towards oneself and an overall evaluation of one's worth. It consists of 10 questions and uses a 4 point Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly agree to 4 being strongly disagree. According to the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale the results needs to be recoded before it can be formulated or a concise result be obtained. This is achieved by scoring strongly disagree with 0, disagree with 1, agree with 2, strongly agree with 3 through items 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7. The remaining questions scores are recoded with strongly disagree being 3, disagree being 2, agree being 1, strongly agree being 0 through items 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10. A resulting score between 15 and 25 are within normal range while a score below 15 suggests low self-esteem. (Rosenberg, 1965).

Participants

Questionnaires were handed out to a sample size of 120 full time employees within the construction industry in Ireland. The total response rate consisted of 120 full time employees was obtained. The participants were selected from site and office based staff. An overall sample of 101 male's (84.2%) and 19 females (15.8%) completed the questionnaire. All participants were native English speakers. A total of 67 males worked on site while a further 34 males worked within the office. A total of 4 females worked on site while a further 15 females worked within the office.

From the total male population of the study the minimum age of the respondents was 20, with a mean age of 33.1 and a maximum age of 55. From the total female population of the study the minimum age of the respondents was 22, with a mean age of 31 and a maximum age of 43.

Design

The design used was a quasi-experimental quantitative design. Descriptive statistics and independent t-test analyses were used to analyse differences and similarities between office and site based staff in relation to total job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, total perceived stress and levels of self-esteem. In addition, the independent t-test analyses were used to determine if a hypothesis could be accepted or rejected. A correlation analysis was used to determine if the number of years in employment was related to job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, total perceived stress and levels of self-esteem. The dependant variables were job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, total perceived stress and levels of self-esteem. The independent variables were gender and employment throughout the office or site.

Procedure

In advance of the survey being conducted, a pilot survey of 30 people bearing the same characteristics as the final participant population were sought to ascertain how effective the questionnaires would be.

Once permission was granted to proceed by Dublin Business School Ethics Committee, questionnaires were distributed to full time site and office employees of a construction firm across both genders. To secure and protect the anonymity of each respondent, on completion, of the survey each respondent was asked to place their questionnaire into a blank sealable envelope. Each participant was informed of resources they could follow-up with in the event that any aspect of the questionnaire resulted in a participant needing assistance or special attention for any reason.

Data Analysis

Using descriptive statistics, univariate analysis was used within this study to ascertain how many respondents were male or female. Their mean age was also calculated along with an overall breakdown of office and site based staff and how many males and females were working within each area. The analysis also looked at who was more likely to be made redundant, male or female and within what area either office or site based.

Using a combination of independent t-tests analysis and correlations, bivariate analysis was used within this study to see if there was a relationship between years of employment within their current job and the respondents total job satisfaction, years of employment within their current job and the respondents satisfaction with life, years of employment within their current job and the respondents perceived stress and years of employment within their current job and the respondents total self esteem. Once the data had been captured, the analysis was carried out using statistical computer software called IBM SPSS Statistics. The software allowed for an accurate review of the findings and in turn ensured the integrity of the research results thus testing the null hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

Once approval was granted by the Dublin Business School Ethics Committee all participants were made fully aware that their participation was voluntary and had the right to withdraw at any stage during the study. They were assured of upmost confidentiality at all times during the survey and were asked not to sign their name anywhere on the questionnaire to insure they remained anonymous. At the end of each questionnaire a number of website addresses of organisations were printed should the participants feel that they were affected by any of the questions.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics; an overall view of the participant sample population

Descriptive statistics were run to see if there would be any difference between office and site based staff when looking at participant's total self-esteem, their perceived stress, their satisfaction with life and their job satisfaction within the current job. The results conclude that there is no difference between the two groups when looking at their total self-esteem levels and their levels of perceived stress. Descriptive statistics were also conducted to reveal the participants total self-esteem, their perceived stress, their satisfaction with life and their job satisfaction within the current job.

The total number of participants within the current study was 120 (N=120). The gender breakdown consisted of 101 (84.2 %) males and 19 (15.5 %) females. The mean age of the total participants within the study was 32.9 (M=32.9) with a standard deviation of 8.2 (SD=8.2). The minimum age of participants within the study was 20 while the maximum was 55. The results also indicated that the majority of participants 71 (N=71) were site based while 49 (N=49) were office based.

The study also revealed that out of the 120 (N=120) total participants 34 (33.7%) of males worked within the office and 67 (66.3%) worked as site based staff. A small amount of females worked as site based staff at 4 (21.1%) while the majority 15 (78.9%) were employed within the office.

The breakdown of participants, shown by the descriptive statistics, that had been made redundant previously was 53 (44.2%) from this 48 (47.5%) were male while 5 (26.3%) were female.

The study revealed females within the company were overall employed for a shorter amount of time, with a mean of 4.6 (M=4.6) and a total maximum length of 20 years with a standard deviation of 5.6 (SD=4.6).

Overall the results showed that males were more likely to be employed with the company for a longer period of time, with a mean of 4.9 (M=4.9) and a total maximum length of employment of 37 years with a standard deviation of 6.4 (SD=8.2).

Results of Hypotheses

Job Satisfaction:

Hypothesis 1

H¹: There will be differences in perceived levels of job satisfaction among office and site based staff

H⁰: There will be no differences in perceived levels of job satisfaction among office and site based staff

T-test analysis was used to examine if there was a significant relationship between office and site based staff employees and their overall job satisfaction. The results showed there to be no significant difference between them, $t(1.5)=108$, $p<.119$. Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted.

Even though the null hypothesis was accepted, the results of the descriptive statistics showed that office workers had a slightly higher level of job satisfaction with a mean value of 47.7 (M=47.7) and a standard deviation of 10.9 (SD=10.9) compared to that of site based staff which scored a mean value of 44.4 (M=44.4) and a standard deviation of 11.9 (SD=11.9).

The results for participant's total job satisfaction shows that males are more satisfied with their job with a mean value of 46.2 (M=46.2) and a standard deviation of 12.1 (SD=12.1) compared to female with a mean value of 43.8 (M=43.8) and a standard deviation of 8.4 (SD=8.4).

Satisfaction with Life:

Hypothesis 2

H¹: There will be differences in life satisfaction among male and female staff

H⁰: There will be no differences in life satisfaction among male and female staff

T-test analysis was used to examine if there was a significant relationship between male and female employees and their satisfaction with life. The results showed there to be no significant difference between them, $t(.101)=23.7$, $p<.92$. Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted.

The results for their overall satisfaction with life shows that men only have a slightly higher level with a mean value of 22.2 (M=22.2) and a standard deviation of 5.8 (SD=5.8) compared to females with a mean value of 22.1 (M=22.1) and a standard deviation of 6.5 (SD=6.5).

The descriptive statistics show that office based workers having a higher satisfaction with life than site based staff with a mean value of 22.6 (M=22.6) and a standard deviation of 6 (SD=6).

Stress:

Hypothesis 3

H¹: There will be differences in stress levels among office and site based staff

H⁰: There will be no differences in stress levels among office and site based staff

T-test analysis was used to examine if there was a significant relationship between perceived stress levels among office and site based staff. The results showed there to be no significant difference between them, $t(.592)=111$, $p<.55$. Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted.

However, when we look at gender differences, the results for their perceived stress shows male employees to have less stress within their lives with a mean value of 20.3 ($M=20.3$) and a standard deviation of 5.6 ($SD=5.6$), while female employees mean value stands at 21.3 ($M=21.3$) and a standard deviation of 5.2 ($SD=5.2$).

Self Esteem:

Hypothesis 4

H^1 : There will be differences in self-esteem levels among office and site based staff.

H^0 : There will be no differences in self-esteem levels among office and site based staff.

A t-test analysis was used to examine if there was a significant relationship between office and site based staff and their level of self-esteem. The results showed there to be no significant difference between them, $t(1.7)=23.8$, $p<.093$. Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted.

The results of the descriptive statistics show that male employees have a total self-esteem higher than that of female employees with a mean value of 32.6 ($M=32.6$) and a standard deviation of 4 ($SD=4$) for males, while female mean score was 30.6 ($M=30.6$) and a standard deviation of 4.5 ($SD=4.5$).

Additional Finding: Impact of Educational Attainment

An unexpected finding of this research was that, the higher educational attainment an employee has, the less likely they were to be made redundant. The results of the t-test showed there to be a significant difference between level of education attainment and the likelihood of being made redundant, $t(3.1)=117$, $p<.002$.

In addition, the results shows that while female participants had less of a risk of being made redundant they also had a higher level of education, 8 (42.1%) held an undergraduate

degree. Male participants were more at risk of being made redundant while 39 (38.6%) only holding a Fetec level 6 certificate.

The descriptive statistics shows that having a higher level of education attainment results in a less likely chance of being made redundant.

Overall 16 (23.9%) of participants holding a Fetec level 6 qualification have never been made redundant before compared to 22 (32.8%) of participants who held an undergraduate degree, while 14 (20.9%) of participants who held a postgraduate degree being the least likely to be made redundant within the construction company.

Pearson's r correlation analysis was conducted to see if there is a relationship between years of employment within their current job and the respondents total job satisfaction, years of employment within their current job and the respondents satisfaction with life, years of employment within their current job and the respondents perceived stress and years of employment within their current job and the respondents total self-esteem.

Pearson's r correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant small positive correlation between job satisfaction and years of employment within the present study ($r=.193$, $N=119$, $p < .05$).

The results also indicated that there was no positive correlation between satisfaction with life and years of employment ($r=.134$, $N=120$, $p < .145$).

There was also no positive correlation shown between perceived stress and years of employment ($r=.065$, $N=120$, $p < .479$).

The results show that there is no positive correlation between self-esteem and years of employment ($r=.070$, $N=120$, $p < .446$).

Chapter 5: Discussion

The research focused on the following areas; the levels of job satisfaction of employees within the construction company, their satisfaction with life, their perceived stress levels and their levels of self-esteem. In particular, the first aim of this study was to identify if office staff or site based staff had a higher level of perceived job satisfaction on the basis of perceived job security. The second aim of this study was to identify if office or site based staff had a higher level of life satisfaction. The third aim of this study was to ascertain if office staff or site based staff had a higher perceived stress rate when faced with pending redundancy. The fourth aim of the study was to establish if office or site based staff had higher levels of self-esteem. Finally, whilst the study did not aim to ascertain if there was a difference in terms of level of educational attainment and its impact on job satisfaction in the context of the risk of being made redundant, satisfaction with life and levels of stress and self-esteem of employees, the results indicated the higher the level of educational attainment, the less likely an employee is to have been made redundant previously.

Job Satisfaction

T-test analysis was used to examine if there was a significant relationship between office and site based staff employees and their overall job satisfaction. The results showed there to be no significant difference between them, $t(1.5)=108$, $p<.119$. Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted.

The results obtained from this study illustrate that there was no significant difference between male and female overall job satisfaction, $t(1)=33$, $p<.33$. Further analysis suggests that males are generally more satisfied within their job while females are slightly more dissatisfied.

According to Arslan & Acar (2013) a person spends a significant part of their life at work; therefore satisfaction at work highly affects the overall quality of life of that person. A person's satisfaction they get from a job will have either positive or negative effects within their life and impact on other parts such as relationships, families and friends. In this regard it is of importance for organisations to utilise their resources effectively and efficiently. Within this study Pearson's r correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant small positive correlation between job satisfaction and years of employment within the present study ($r=.193$, $N=119$, $p < .05$) which suggest that the length of time a person is employed within a company, his or her job satisfaction and sense of job security will grow in tandem which is very important to both the company and person as Arslan & Acar (2013) points out. Further t-test analysis was conducted to see if there was a significant difference between being made redundant and level of education attainment. The results of the t-test showed there to be a significant difference between level of education attainment and the likelihood of being made redundant, $t(3.1)=117$, $p<.002$). This study is in agreement with Erlinghagen, (2008) whose findings suggest that feelings of insecurity decline with increased qualifications in turn leading to a more overall satisfied work force within a company.

Furthermore, Erlinghagen, (2008) points out that paid work is of fundamental importance to modern day societies, not only does it provide the means of substance but also the means to structure society and the status of individuals within it. Individuals will therefore endeavour to remain in gainful employment with the least amount of interruptions as possible.

Satisfaction with life

The results of this study conclude there was no significant difference between male and female office and site based staff when looking at their satisfaction with life, $t(101)=23.7$, $p<.92$, therefore a null hypothesis can be accepted. Further analysis suggests that overall office based workers have a higher satisfaction with life than that of site based workers.

Although females within the company are less likely to be made redundant this has no reflection on their overall satisfaction with life who scored a mean value of ($M=22.1$) compared to males satisfaction with life who scored a mean value of ($M=22.2$). According to Diener, et al. (1985) a score between 21 and 25 means a person is only slightly satisfied with life. In theory both males and females scored between ($M=22.1$) and ($M=22.2$) which may be a direct consequence of working within a construction company meaning, work of this nature is always within a state of constant flux. Sang, Ison & Dainty (2009) suggest there is evidence that people who work with the construction industry are exposed to a number of stressors that will affect their overall satisfaction with life, namely; long working hours, high workloads, poor work-life balance, a low sense of professional worth and the lack of job security.

Stress

The results of the study illustrate there was no significant difference between office and site based staff in terms of levels of stress, $t(.592)=111$, $p<.55$, therefore a null hypothesis can be accepted. Further analysis suggests that overall male and female workers within the construction company experienced higher than normal stress levels. According to Cohen et al. (1983) total respondents scores that are around 13 are considered to have average stress levels, while respondents who scores above 20 are considered to have high stress levels.

Within this study male respondents had a mean score of 20.3 (M=20.3) and females had a mean score of 21.3 (M=21.3) which bring them into the category of high stress. The results of this study showed females having slightly more stress within their lives than male workers. Therefore this study is in agreement with Knabe & Ratzel (2011) who indicate overwhelming evidence to suggest that employed individuals will suffer from greater stress in their lives and have a much lower level of life satisfaction if they feel they are faced with unemployment in the near future. Furthermore unemployment in the individuals past may also play a part on stress levels when he or she is re-employed in the future, Knabe & Ratzel (2011) refer to this as the scaring effect which is frightening to the individual and reduces current wellbeing in one's life. Stress can also have a detrimental effect to one's safety while working on site, according to research carried out by Leung., Chan., & Yuen (2010) peoples psychological feelings greatly influence their behaviours and safety performance. This study reports that there is two types of stress, the first being emotional stress and the second being job stress, these are both linked to a poorer safety record while working. Construction sites are widely accepted as being dangerous places of work with a high level of fatalities recorded each year in Ireland alone. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) (2014) reported construction fatalities in between 2002 and 2014. Within 2002 alone, 22 people have died as a result of working on construction sites, which puts construction work as the most dangerous sector to be working in, the second highest being agriculture, with a reported 14 deaths being reported in the same year. Up until 2007 to 2008 these figures held constant, but the years after that the rate dropped to below half of that in 2002. There is an obvious reason why the number of deaths had dropped which is can be attributed to the recession that Ireland had fallen into. In 2013 the fatality figures stand at 11 deaths which is a direct comparison to the amount of people working in the sector. On reflection of same, one can conclude that stress has a major

impact of the current well-being of each and every individual working within the construction sector, not only their psychological wellbeing but also their physical wellbeing also.

Self Esteem

At-test analysis was used to examine if there was a significant relationship between office and site based staff and their level of self-esteem. The results showed there to be no significant difference between them, $t(1.7)=23.8$, $p<.093$. Therefore the null hypothesis can be accepted. In addition, the results of the study illustrate there was no significant difference between male and female staff in terms of self-esteem, $t(1.7) =23.8$, $p<.093$. Further analysis suggests that male employees have a total self-esteem higher than that of female employees with a mean value of 32.6 ($M=32.6$) for males, while the female mean score was 30.6 ($M=30.6$).

According to Rosenberg (1965) scores within 15 to 25 are within normal range of self-esteem levels, scores above this relate to a higher level of self-esteem. The results conclude that there was also no difference in the total level of self-esteem between office and site based staff. There was also no positive correlation between self-esteem and years of employment ($r=.070$, $N=120$, $p < .446$). The study suggests that the participants of this study all have above average self-esteem levels. This above average self-esteem level may be subject to change according to a recent leading research conducted by Steiger., Allemand., Robins & Fend (2014) who suggest that self-esteem levels have been proven to change over time. The study concludes, individuals who enter adolescents with a low self-esteem are more likely to suffer symptoms of depression in their adult lives. Further finding of the research suggest that self-esteem is an important factor for many life outcomes such as, improved job performance, academic achievements and closeness in romantic relationships. In contrast,

low self-esteem predicts a number of behavioural issues such as, delinquency, poor physical and psychological health and limited economic prospects in life.

The above findings suggest that a high level of self-esteem is very important within human life, it allow us to carve our own path. By extension, it is confidence in our ability to learn, manage change, and make the correct decisions and choices within our lives that help us to achieve all things great, high self-esteem as outlined above can and does help to achieve this.

[Additional Finding: Impact of Educational Attainment](#)

An unexpected finding of this research was that, the higher educational attainment an employee has, the less likely they were to be made redundant. The results of the t-test showed there to be a significant difference between level of education attainment and the likelihood of being made redundant, $t(3.1)=117, p<.002$.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011) reported that in all OECD countries, individuals with a tertiary-level degree have a greater chance of being employed than those without such a degree. In addition, the report states that higher education improves job prospects, in general, and the likelihood of remaining employed in times of economic hardship whilst differences in employment rates between men and women are wider among less-educated groups.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2011) described in a report that in Quarter 2 (Q2), labour force participation rates amongst those aged 25-64 clearly increased as the level of education attained increased; those with a third level qualification were almost twice as likely to be in the labour force (87%) compared to those with at most primary level education (46%). While this relationship was observed for both males and females, it was much

stronger amongst females; in Q2 2011 females aged 25-64 with a third level qualification were almost three times as likely to be in the labour force (83%) compared to females with at most primary level of education (30%). The corresponding values for males in Q2 2011 were 92% and 59% respectively.

Limitations

This research is somewhat limited by the small sample size of 120 participants from only one construction company. A larger sample size from multiple companies within the construction sector would have allowed for a broader range of participants and also allowed for further categories to be added to the study. In addition, combining it with a qualitative methodology would have allowed the researcher to run further in-depth analysis and ascertain new elements that would have been missed for doing quantitative alone. Another limitation of this study was that the female population was quite limited in number when compared to the level of male respondents. Overall, construction work is very male orientated, but by splitting the sample evenly across both genders it is possible for a more accurate result to be obtained. Geographical and time limitations will also hinder the study in terms of a broader sample that could be collected from the four corners of Ireland in turn giving much more accurate findings. Furthermore, this research could have split the sample over two opposite sectors of employment to observe what the difference may be in term of psychological wellbeing.

Further research within the area of pending redundancy in Ireland is paramount to achieving a reduction in the psychological distress suffered by individuals who find themselves within this situation. It has been widely acknowledged that job insecurity can cause a number of issues to the individual such as deterioration of health, both physical and psychological, depression, stress and organisational withdrawal, all of which will have

destructive implications to one's life. Furthermore, research should be carried out to see if stress and work place accidents are linked to one another in Ireland.

Conclusion

In conclusion, results of this research strongly suggest that individuals with a higher level of education attainment are less likely to be made redundant. Furthermore, the research has acknowledged that working within the construction sector has a negative impact on one's overall stress levels and satisfaction with life which may cause further implications in later life. However, as always, a greater amount of attention needs to be paid to addressing the needs of those individuals who remain within jobs that will certainly end up coming to an end. Employment gives people a purpose, having a job makes people feel worthwhile, earning a wage depletes despair and increases positive self-esteem, all of which raises people's standard of living and unquestionably sets a great example for future generations. Levels of job-satisfaction, life satisfaction, impact of stress and levels of self-esteem are intrinsically linked. Living with the fear of uncertainty and the constant perceived threat of unemployment and pending redundancy also has widespread consequences on an employee's relationships outside of work, the sense of control they have over their lives, the status they are accorded by society on a social hierarchies. We have seen that paid work, a sense of purpose, increased security and sense of control play an integral role to employees at a very basis level. Whilst individuals can take responsibility for positioning themselves to be the most highly educated they can be, social policy and organisational initiatives need to be implemented at national and governmental level to prevent job security from becoming a widespread unobtainable aspiration for construction workers and their families.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire booklet used in the present study



Employment and the Construction Industry

This study is concerned about employment and the construction industry in the current economic climate in Ireland. Please answer each section as honestly as you can, do not spend too long thinking about each question as there are no right or wrong answers. Any information that you give will remain strictly confidential, you are not required to write your name anywhere on this survey.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and co-operation.
If you require any further information concerning this research, please contact myself or my project supervisor at the address below.

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Your confidentiality is of utmost importance. Please do not sign your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Please CIRCLE the block applicable to you

1. Gender.

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Age _____

3. Years of Employment within current job _____

4. Have you been made redundant before?

Yes	No
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5. If yes, how long for? _____

6. Please choose your highest level of education to date.

- Primary
- Secondary
- FETAC Level 6
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate

7. Your Occupation.

- Office Based.
- Site Based.
- Other.

Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number. Rate your answers on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being Very Satisfied and 5 being Very Dissatisfied. Please attempt all questions. Be as honest as possible. There is no right or wrong answer.

		Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
1	Being able to keep busy all the time at work	1	2	3	4	5
2	The chance to work alone on the job	1	2	3	4	5
3	The chance to be somebody in the community	1	2	3	4	5
4	The chance to do different things from time to time	1	2	3	4	5
5	The way my boss handles his/her workers	1	2	3	4	5
6	The competence of my supervisor in making decisions	1	2	3	4	5
7	Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience	1	2	3	4	5
8	The way my job provides a steady employment	1	2	3	4	5
9	The chance to do things for other people	1	2	3	4	5
10	The chance to tell people what to do	1	2	3	4	5
11	The chance to do something to make use of my abilities	1	2	3	4	5
12	The way company policies are put into practise	1	2	3	4	5
13	My pay and amount of work that I do	1	2	3	4	5
14	The chance for advancement on this job	1	2	3	4	5
15	The freedom to use my own judgement on this job	1	2	3	4	5
16	The chance to try my own methods of doing the job	1	2	3	4	5
17	The working conditions	1	2	3	4	5
18	The way my co-workers get along with each other	1	2	3	4	5
19	The praise I get for doing a good job	1	2	3	4	5
20	The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job	1	2	3	4	5

Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number. Rate your answers on a scale of 1-7 with 1 being Strongly Disagree and 7 being Strongly Agree. Please attempt all questions.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	In most ways my life is close to my ideal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	The conditions of my life are excellent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I am satisfied with life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number. Rate your answers on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being Strongly Agree and 4 being Strongly Disagree. Please attempt all questions.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	1	2	3	4
2	I feel that I have a number of good qualities	1	2	3	4
3	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	1	2	3	4
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people	1	2	3	4
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of	1	2	3	4
6	I take a positive attitude toward myself	1	2	3	4
7	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	1	2	3	4
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself	1	2	3	4
9	I certainly feel useless at times	1	2	3	4
10	At times I think I am no good at all	1	2	3	4

Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with them by circling the appropriate number. Rate your answers on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being Never and 5 being Very Often. Please attempt all questions.

		Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
1	In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly	1	2	3	4	5
2	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life	1	2	3	4	5
3	In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed	1	2	3	4	5
4	In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems	1	2	3	4	5
5	In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way	1	2	3	4	5
6	In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do	1	2	3	4	5
7	In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life	1	2	3	4	5
8	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things	1	2	3	4	5
9	In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control	1	2	3	4	5
10	In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them	1	2	3	4	5

End of questionnaire. Many thanks for your participation. Please find details below for organisations that may be useful.

- www.citizensinformation.ie
- www.aware.ie
- www.fas.ie
- www.yourmentalhealth.ie
- www.losingyourjob.ie