Experiences of Women in Ireland Re-entering the Workplace following a Career Break

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Higher Diploma in Psychology at

Dublin Business School, School of Arts, Dublin.

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Word Count: 9,320

March 2020

Department of Psychology

Dublin Business School

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Declaration

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"I declare that this thesis that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of HDip Psychology is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree."

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Date: 20th March 2020

Word Count: 9,320

Acknowledgements

Thank you to each of the women who shared their experiences and thoughts so openly and honestly, I really appreciate your time, this research couldn't have happened without you.

Thank you to my supervisor Dr. Lucie Corcoran for supporting me through every step of the process, your quick responses to my queries allayed any worries that arose. On a personal note thanks for being so understanding.

Thank you to Dr. Pauline Hyland for the weekly support and guidance. It really did help make the process easier.

Thank you to Seán, my husband who has taken on the caring role in the family, and supported me through the many different emotions experienced throughout this journey.

Thank you to Eoghan, my eldest son, who has helped encourage me to stick at it when times got tough, now a university student himself.

Thank you to Rónán, my second son, who came to the rescue numerous times with advice on computers.

Thank you to Eleanor, my eldest daughter, who has helped keep the family running smoothly in my absences as I completed this thesis.

Thank you to Alanah, my youngest child who has contributed by baking numerous cakes and provided me with endless cups of tea

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1. Abstract

This study aims to explore how women in Ireland who have returned to work following a career break perceive themselves in relation to their work and family roles. Do these women feel supported by employers, colleagues and family and have they encountered obstacles in returning to the workplace? What do they perceive as their own and others' attitudes towards women in the workplace, and have these attitudes changed across their lifespan. The study used semi-structured qualitative interviews with 5 participants aged between 45-54 who had returned to work following a career break. The study reports despite dramatic changes in attitudes to women participation in the workplace in Ireland, there has been a disappointing lack of change to structures within the workplace and equality among partners in domestic activities has not materialized. These findings may help inform future policies to aid the retention of valuable female participation in the workforce.

2. Introduction

This Study hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of women in Ireland upon their return to the workplace following a break in their career. Several studies have highlighted the difficulties experienced by women as they combine employment and personal lives (Lee, McHale, Crouter, Hammer & Almeida, 2017; Cheng & McCarthy, 2013; Hyland Tajlili, 2014) especially if the career break was child related, with women often facing penalties such as job change and loss of earnings (Arun, Arun, & Borooah, 2004). When women return to work they often find difficulty securing a job that reflects their competency and suits their current lifestyles, with many struggling with guilt, stress, low self esteem and role conflicts (Saleena & Mavoothu, 2015). Maineiro and Sullivan (2005) developed their Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) as a means of understanding the career interruption phenomenon experienced by many women during their careers, they suggest that women's careers do not follow the same linear model of men's careers. This study hopes to ascertain the experiences of women in the 45-55 age group from an Irish perspective . By conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, the current study may uncover new ideas or issues that women face on returning to work following a career break.

2.1 *Women and employment participation rates in Ireland*

Mahon (1998) stated that in 1995 Ireland had the lowest female participation rate in the labour market (35%) in the European Union (EU), this could be explained by the low participation rate of married women of 31% in 1995. Social Justice Ireland (2019) reported that there has been an increase in female labour participation rates in all age cohorts over the age of 25. In 1998, among 45-54 year olds, the labour force participation rate (LFPR) for men was 87.6% and 47.3% for women. In the (Q2, 2019) survey there was no real change for

men with 88.4% but for women in this age bracket there was a huge 25.3% increase in the last two decades to 72.6% (Labour Force Survey, CSO, Q2, 2019). Callaghan, Ivory and Lavelle (2018) report that employment rates in Ireland show that despite an increasing number of females with children in employment there is still a fall in employment rates for females with more than one child. This effect is seen across all education levels but is less prevalent with women attaining a third level education (Callaghan et al., 2018). As women in this study fell into the 45-54 age bracket, and all had time out for a career break, it will be beneficial to assess their perceptions of any role conflicts, career penalties and intrapersonal issues which may have arisen in re-entering the workforce for this age group.

2.2 *Government policies that may have affected female participation in Ireland*

Mahon (1998) states that historically there was a number of factors which prevented women in Ireland from entering the labour force. The Constitution of 1937 enshrined a complementary role for women in the home (Constitution of Ireland, 1937, Article 41.2):

2.1 In particular, the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2.2 The State shall, therefore, endeavor to ensure that mothers should not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to neglect their duties in the home.

(Article 41.2, Constitution of Ireland, 1937)

Also the marriage bar, legislation preventing married women from being employed in the Civil Service and banks wasn't eliminated until 1973. Membership of the EU in 1973 facilitated the introduction of progressive legal changes such as the introduction of the Employment Equality Act in 1977 and the Maternity Protection of Employment Act in 1981 (Mahon, 1998, p. 171). Mahon (1998, p.155) suggests that despite the introduction of equal

opportunity policies, women's participation has differed from men's because they take responsibility for childcare and eldercare which has not been recognized by such policies.

2.3 *Declining birthrates in Ireland*

Mahon (1998) states that reasons for variations in married women's participation is influenced by the family size rather than marriage per se and the age of the youngest child may be an influencing factor to their participation in the workforce. There has been a steady decline in family sizes since 1961, with a corresponding increase in the proportion of married women at work. Fine-Davis (2015) notes Ireland still has a higher birth rate than most other EU countries which she attributes to the influence of the catholic church. In 1970 women in Ireland had an average of just under four whereas from 1990 onwards it has hovered around two (Fine-Davies, 2015, p. 7). McGreevy (2019) reports that reasons for the decrease in birth rates in Ireland may be demographic and economic as the costs of childcare and buying a home impacts on the birthrates. The high cost of childcare and number of children may therefore act as a deterrent for mothers who wish to re-enter the workforce. This study will look at such issues.

2.4 *Changes of attitudes towards women's participation in the workforce in Ireland*

Fine-Davis (2015) reaffirms Mahon's (1998) findings that the removal of the "marriage bar" in 1973 and a series of legislative changes concerning equal pay, equal employment opportunity, contraception and taxation policies helped to remove barriers to women joining the labour force. The influencing role of the Catholic church during the last few decades has significantly declined with women now able to control their fertility. There was also a major shift in attitudes with a greater acceptance of women's roles outside the home as well as attitudes in perceptions towards female equality which has resulted in Ireland becoming a more secular society and the increased participation of women in third level

education has resulted in a dramatic rise in the number of women participating in the labour force (Fine-Davies, 2015). Fine-Davies (2015) and Mahon (1998) also identified that there is a reluctance by many males to share the housework, although they support their female partners wish to work outside the home, they often don't recognize that they have to contribute more than they used to. This highlights one of the most difficult problems faced by women participating in the workforce, namely how to share the domestic responsibilities (Fine-Davies, 2015). As well as the above mentioned factors related to female work participation, Fine-Davies states that there is still a widely held view by both sexes that mothers are better at providing care for their children than the father (Fine-Davies, 2015, p. 199). Barnes (2015, xxii) in the foreword of Fine-Davies (2015) reports that despite women's participation in employment outside the home, it is the women who have had to make the greatest changes. The current study wishes to ascertain if the participants feel there have been changes in attitudes towards women's participation in the workforce.

2.5 *Provision of childcare*

In Ireland early childhood education and care services are delivered outside the formal education system through a diverse range of private, community and voluntary organisations which are described as creches, nurseries, pre-schools, naíonraí (Irish language pre-schools), playgroups and daycare services. Government does not provide childcare services directly, however the introduction of free Pre-school year scheme was introduced in 2010 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs which enables eligible children to avail of two years of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2020). The impact of childcare provision to the women retuning to work will be discussed in this study.

2.6 *Kaleidoscope Career Model*

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) developed the Kaleidoscope Career model (KCM) as a means to understanding the "Opt-out" or career interruption phenomenon experienced by many women. Like a kaleidoscope, women's career patterns shift as they rotate different aspects of their lives to arrange their roles and relationships in new ways (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Women tend to factor in the needs of their children, spouses, aging parents and their co-workers, however men's careers decisions are more independent and goal driven and they tend to keep work and non-work lives separate. Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) KCM identify three parameters, Authenticity, Balance and Challenge which women have to consider in their professional lives across their lifespan, which they call the ABC Model of Kaleidoscope Careers:

(i)   Authenticity refers to whether one feels they can be themselves in the midst of any situation while remaining authentic;

(ii)   Balance incorporates questions around finding balance if one makes a certain career choice; and

(iii)   Challenge questions will look at whether the career chosen will offer enough stimulation to the individual.

Over the course of their lifespan women search for the best fit that matches the context of her life at any given time (see Appendix A for diagram portraying the ABC Model of KCM, Maineiro & Sullivan, 2005). Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) KCM suggest that for women their primary focus in early career is Challenge, with Balance becoming more important in mid-career and Authenticity becoming the primary focus in late career. A qualitative study by O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) concurs with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that traditional

models of career development have predominantly focused on the career experiences of men and do not reflect the experiences of women. O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) proposed a similar age-linked model for women's career development which they named phase1: the idealistic achievement phase; phase 2: the pragmatic endurance phase; and Phase 3: the reinventive contribution phase. They found that women moved from a mostly positive career experience in phase 1 to many negative career experiences in phase 2 and then returned to a more positive perspective in phase 3. Negative experiences in phase 2 is likely to occur during the mid-life phase between the ages of 40-45. They also found that women in the reinventive contribution phase have unique talents and abilities which come from life experiences which need to be recognized and utilized. With these models in mind the experiences of women in Ireland will be examined in this study.

Carbrera (2007) found in their study that in line with KCM predictions, as well as rearing children reasons cited for leaving employment were that their career focus had changed, mid-career women were interested in finding balance and their desire for authenticity increased across their lifespan. Carbrera (2009) and Healy (1999) suggests that as shown by the KCM there is a need for a different approach from traditional career models which focus on fulltime, continuous employment towards a more flexible career model that allows women to manage their own careers in alignment with their personal values. However, more recent reports have criticized the new models such as the KCM, stating that although these models broke away from the dominant view of careers being continuous they are too loosely defined and have little empirical support (Inkson et al., 2012; Tams & Arthur, 2010). Further research in this area such as this study will help determine how useful the KCM model is in describing female participation in the workplace.

2.7 Recent Research

Research investigating the experiences of women who return to work following a break in their career find that the women often struggle with work and family commitments (Hyland Tajlili, 2014). Chalofsky (2003) states that in today's hectic society, there may be a struggle to find balance for many women, as they continue to be the primary carers of children, in merging their personal and professional lives to achieve fulfilment and satisfaction. Saleena & Mavoothu (2015) found that as well as role conflict many woman re-entering the workplace struggle with major intrapersonal issues such as stress, guilt and loss of self-confidence, however there may be other factors involved, which affect this group of women therefore more research in this area is needed. Lemmer (1990) stated that women lose self-confidence during a career break. Tipping and Farmer (1991) define role conflict as being a psychological state, often below the level of awareness which arises when individuals perceive an incompatibility between two important roles such as homemaker and worker. This study will look at the participants perceptions of any intrapersonal issues that they may have encountered.

Other studies have identified that as well as role conflicts there may be cultural attitudes that affect how women are treated in the workplace, Mahon (1998) and Fine-Davis (2015) specifically look at the Irish situation as detailed earlier. Other research has focused on how the length of career break impacts women's careers. Aisenbrey, Evertsson and Grunow (2009) found in the United States, even for a short career break there was a career punishment. In Germany there was a greater risk of downward movement the longer the absence from work and in Sweden it was found that career prospects increased by returning to work sooner. Furthermore, some researchers identify that women who have taken a career break to care for their young children are particularly discriminated against when returning to the workplace, the longer the break in their career often results in higher penalties and costs

such as job change and income losses (Arun, Arun, & Borooah, 2004). This study will look at how the participants perceive the length of their career break may have impacted their return to work.

Ravindran and Baral (2014) looked at factors affecting the work attitudes of Women re-entering the IT sector in India, they suggest that there is a lack of qualitative research which prevents the emergence of new ideas regarding re-entry women and studies examining the job-related attitudes of re-entry women are also limited. They suggest that there is little known about the main reasons for career exit and re-entry and what factors, barriers, challenges and opportunities are encountered by women who decide to return to work following a career break from an individual, family and organizational perspective. Therefore this qualitative study will add to the lack of relevant studies in this area. Cultural differences may play an important role on the reasons for career breaks and re-entering the workforce (Hewlett & Rashid, 2010; Herman & Lewis, 2012). This study may add to the body of knowledge from an Irish perspective as to what barriers women face when returning to the work environment. As well as cultural aspects, organisational supports may help to ease the difficulties faced by women returning to work, Lanzun, Morganson, Major and Green (2010) in their study examined employees' work-life balance and how their supervisors responded to them. Their study concluded that there is a need for greater flexibility and support within organisations in shaping work-family culture. This view was supported by Lee, McHale, Crouter, Hammer and Almeida (2017) in their study recommending that employees would benefit from increased family time, which in turn would lead to a decrease in work-family conflict. This study will examine if the participants felt their employers were flexible and supportive of them on their return to the workplace .

The researcher was able to find only one recent study by Herman (2015) examining the experiences of women in the UK and Republic of Ireland who have attempted to return to

work following a career break in the science, engineering and technology (SET) professions. Herman (2015) concludes that due to the deep-rooted masculine association with the SET professions many women faced additional barriers to those in other sectors when returning after a career break. In order to retain talented and skilled women, SET industries need to accommodate women's non-linear career patterns (Herman, 2015). With this in mind the current qualitative study through the use of semi-structured interviews aims to examine organizational factors like policy support, work-family culture, job satisfaction and career satisfaction from the viewpoint of women living in Ireland returning to the workplace. This is especially important as there is a reported continual upward trend of woman returning to work over the last decades, especially in the 45-54 year old age bracket.

Jahoda (1982) notes in her Latent Deprivation Model that as well as financial rewards from being at work, employment helps individuals to meet certain psychological needs. These latent benefits include time structure, social contact, common goals, status and activity which all result in better mental health. This study will see if the women feel that employment has provided any of these positive outcomes upon their re-entry to the workplace.

2.8 *Rationale for current study*

By gathering information on the reasons for women opting in and opting out of the workforce the present study will add to the empirical work on women's experiences in returning to the workplace following a career break. Zimmerman and Clark (2016) suggest that research on women's career breaks is warranted due to the changing demographics of the current workforce (increased women's participation in the workforce) and women's career values. On a practical level, Carbrera (2009) and Herman (2015) state that companies who understand the motives behind professional women's career moves may be better placed to recognize and respond to how women feel valued therefore attracting and retaining valuable

female talent, giving them a competitive edge over their rivals in the workforce. Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger and Meaney (2008) state that many countries and regions face talent shortages and by 2040 Europe will have a shortfall of 24 million workers aged 15 to 65: but by raising the proportion of women to men in the workplace the gap could be cut to 3 million. Ravindran and Baral (2014) suggest that there is a lack of qualitative research which prevents the emergence of new ideas regarding re-entry women and studies examining the job-related attitudes of re-entry women are also limited. In this study by conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, the researcher may uncover new ideas or issues that women are facing on returning to work following a career break.

2.9 *Research Questions*

Questions included:

- Do women encounter work-life conflicts?

- Do Women feel supported by Family/peers and managers?

- What barriers, if any have arisen in their returning to the workplace?

- What do they perceive as the attitudes towards them in the workplace?

- Have their own attitudes changed throughout their lifespan in regards to working and do they feel that returning to work has been a positive experience for them?

3. Methods

3.1 *Participants*

The target population for this study was women living in Ireland who have returned to work following a break in their career, therefore purposive sampling was used. The length of career break was not an issue, neither was the race or age of the participant as Ireland has culturally become much more diversified in recent years. As qualitative semi-structured interviews were being used five participants were sought to take part in the research.

3.1.1 *Participant Recruitment*

Following approval by the Dublin Business School (DBS) ethics board, participants were recruited to take part in the study on a voluntary basis. The use of snowballing of colleagues and friends was used in obtaining individuals to take part in the study. They were then contacted by text or phone call to invite them to take part as they fulfilled the criteria of having returned to work following a career break and had expressed interest in taking part. Each individual was given an information sheet (see Appendix B) explaining that the study wished to find out about the experiences of women upon their return to the workplace. The five participants who were selected were not given any incentives or rewards and participated of their own free will. Due to the area being studied the women who participated ranged in the 45-52 years age bracket.

3.2 *Design*

As the researcher was unable to obtain much research looking at the experiences of Irish women on returning to the workplace following a career break and the focus of the research was to gather the thoughts and experiences of women, qualitative semi-structured interviews were used. Qualitative research may see the emergence of new ideas and as

Ravindran and Baral (2014) suggest there is a need to examine the attitudes of women who reenter the workplace as there are very few studies in this area. The use of the semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to focus on areas that have previously been identified in the literature as being pertinent to women returning to the workplace while affording the participants to elaborate on their own personal experiences. Doody and Noonan (2013) state that semi-structured interviews are the most common method utilized in Qualitative studies.

The design of the qualitative interview began with the development of questions around issues such as length of career break, reasons for returning to work, whether the women felt supported by family, partners and work colleagues upon their return to the workplace. Other questions looked at issues around flexibility, career choices and whether the women believed there was a cultural aspect to their staying at home and whether they believed that government was doing enough to help women to return to the workplace and whether women's attitudes towards the role of work has changed across their lifetime (See Appendix C for guideline questions used in the interview). An individual face to face interview was conducted and as the interviews progressed the interviewee was encouraged to share their own individual experiences, therefore the interviews may have deviated from the guideline questions.

3.3 *Materials*

Prior to commencing the interviews Participants were given an information sheet (see Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the study; criteria to participate; that the interview would be recorded and any recordings would be destroyed one year post interview. Participants would be allowed to withdraw their data up to two weeks post interview but thereafter their data would be included . Contact details for interviewer and supervisor were also included. Participants were then given the opportunity to ask any questions. Consent Form (see Appendix D) was also completed before interview commenced, and post interview

the participants received a debriefing sheet (see Appendix E) which included relevant statutory employment rights contact details.

3.3.1 *Apparatus*

A Dell Inspiron 15-5000 Series Laptop (password Protected) was used to produce the information sheet, interview questions, consent and debriefing forms and were printed on Epson ET-2700 printer to give to participants.

The interviews were recorded on a Huawei P20 phone and backed up on a digital voice recorder to protect against technical problems. HiSuite App was used to download the recordings to the Inspiron 15-5000 Series Laptop to assist transcription, which were then stored on the laptop, but will be deleted five years following interviews. Analysis of data was conducted using NVIVO 12 software.

3.4 *Procedure*

Once Participants had agreed to take part in the study, an agreed venue and date and time was set up. All participants decided to come to the interviewers home as it was the most convenient for them, where they were interviewed in a private room. Following reading the information sheet the participants were given opportunity to discuss any issues they may have had before signing the consent form. The semi-structured interviews then took place with the use of guideline questions (see Appendix C) and lasted approximately thirty minutes each. Interviews were recorded using equipment as already mentioned. Following interview the participants were given the debriefing letter (see Appendix E) and had an opportunity to reflect on their interview although this was not recorded.

3.4.1 *Ethical Considerations*

Before conducting the research full ethical approval was obtained from Dublin Business School (DBS) Ethical Approvals Board and designed in accordance with the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) Code of Ethics.

Written consent was obtained from each participant prior to the commencement of the interview agreeing to their interviews being recorded but that the recordings would be destroyed one year post interview (see Appendix D).

Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any stage during the recording and they could withdraw their data up to two weeks post interview but following that their data would be included in the research study.

Following the interviews, to ensure that information was not divulged to third parties, the recordings and transcriptions of each interview were retained in a password protected laptop, with signed consent forms and written documentation stored in a locked filing cabinet.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used in all instances and were names of family and colleagues may have been divulged these were changed throughout all the transcriptions. Extra care was taken in the write up of the study that no participant could be identified from the quotes that were used. Each interview was given a number rather than a name to protect participant identity.

On completion of the interview each participant was given a debriefing sheet with contact numbers with relevant details of how to contact national employment rights authorities (see Appendix E).

3.5 *Data Analysis*

Following transcription into separate Microsoft Word documents, the transcripts were transferred into Nvivo12, a tool used to assist in the development of first codes and later themes from the entire data set to find patterns and themes from within the data. The present study used the six steps of thematic analysis as per Braun and Clarke (2006). An inductive approach to data coding and analysis was used as this is a bottom-up approach and is driven by what is in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was used as it allows for themes to be identified without trying to fit the data into a pre-existing coding frame and new information about the experiences of women returning to work following a career break may be revealed.

Table 1: Theme Descriptions for Women in Ireland who returned to work following a career break (with Quotes)

Theme	Description	Descriptive Quote
Lack of confidence/ belief in themselves	Anxiety and fear of returning to work . nervous about own abilities, lack of self-esteem, lack of knowledge. Impact of level of education, daunting experience,	and the thought of a computer was just scaring the life out of me But in the beginning, it was like you know, just give me kids any day because I'm just comfortable with them, I am out of my comfort zone here and I don't know if I like it
Difficulty adapting to both roles	Torn between roles, juggling family and work. Busy schedules, Tiredness, still expected to do household chores, perfectionist attitude, role of training and support by employers and colleagues, difficulty in changing mindset as main carer, feeling guilty, children worried about changes in routines, support from partners and grown children, changes in technology, work practices and policies.	Oh definitely torn, that is a great term for it, yeah absolutely without a doubt, yeah the old guilt of, and not so much even guilt, but wanting to be there, as well, because you know I love that part of the day, when you know when everyone comes in and I like being there to greet them or whatever ,hear about the day.
Flexible working hours/childcare provision	Need for flexible working hours, need for job with school hours, childcare provision, flexibility of managers, part-time employment, full time job, want to stay with kids.	EM, I found it tricky to get a job, to get work because I wanted specific hours, so that was my, so that was my personal request. It's hard to get a job that will facilitate school hours, but I wanted a job to facilitate, I suppose I have that flexibility, you know even the fact that I job share with my job share partner, you know we actually work very well together, so there is great flexibility if we need to cover for each other
Cultural Aspects	Wanted to stay with kids, view that it was their responsibility to mind kids, expected to mind kids, husband supported them to stay at home, responsible for aged parents, family commitments. Different cultures in the workplace.	Em……I think times have changed, however, I think we take it on ourselves, we are like the strong super women, that we can sacrifice this for a little while But we are seeing a little bit, but that's good too. Everyone brings a different experience and different ideas and whatever.
Positive Aspects to working	Wished returned to work sooner, sanity, a distraction, work helped with marriage breakup. need for fulfilment, financial aspects to working, exciting, enjoy working, social aspects, children become more independent	Social, financial and I would say my confidence as a mother and a woman has changed. Yes, yeah, they were all in school. I was at home myself looking at the four walls.
Women's changes in attitude towards the role of Work	Untapped talent, more to offer, more mature , feel you are making a difference, change of priorities	and you hear about the recruitment crises all the time. and I imagine there is a whole workforce of us ladies in our forties who have reared our children and are like come on, now take me on , I am here to work. But, I'm a bit more settled and confident maybe, a bit more confident, I think the years have given ……

4. Results

4.1 *Thematic Analysis*

The first step of this method is to become familiar with the data, this was done by listening carefully to each recording, then by transcribing each interview, the researcher became totally immersed in the individuals narrative of their experiences. The second step was to create initial codes. Codes were a mix of descriptive and interpretative depending on what the researcher deemed important to include, not merely based on the quantity of their presence in the data set. The third step was to search for themes, by using Nvivo the researcher was able to group and organize codes into potential themes with supporting data extracts. The fourth step was a review of these themes and refining them, with some of the original themes being integrated into other themes and the themes being renamed as deemed appropriate by the researcher. The fifth step was to review these themes to ensure that the themes were not too diverse and actually highlighted the individual experiences of the women on their return to the workplace (see Figure 1 on page 27 for Model of Themes and sub-themes). An essentialist/realist approach was taken throughout the whole process of thematic analysis to ensure the data reflected the participants reality and experiences accurately. The sixth and final step of thematic analysis was to produce a report providing evidence of the identified themes by using relevant quotes from the data.

4.2 *Themes*

As a result of the systematic thematic analysis process outlined above, six key themes were developed to illustrate the experiences and thoughts of women in Ireland upon re-entering the workplace following a break in their career. See Table 1 (on page 17) for an example of direct quotes reflecting the identified themes as being relevant to the study. The themes are listed however the order does not reflect the importance each theme may have in

describing the issues and experiences of the participants but some of the themes are closely related to each other and build on previous themes.

4.2.1 *Lack of Confidence/belief in themselves*

Every participant expressed a fear of going back to work especially as all the participants had taken a relatively long break from the workplace. Participant 4 had the shortest gap which was 9 years as opposed to participant 5 who had not worked outside the home for 20 years. Participant 1 and 5, both had a change in type of employment they returned to, whereas the other 3 participants returned to similar nursing careers. Each participant spoke of going back to work as a daunting experience and cited lack of knowledge, lack of self-esteem and even their level of education and family backgrounds as having an impact on how they felt about re-entering the workplace:

Participant 1: *"Yeah, it was nerve wrecking too at the time. God right, they offer you a job and you go ok, OH my God, Can I do this?"*

Participant 5: *" but probably didn't have the opportunity because my dad was like an alcoholic , no, it wasn't a very pleasant childhood, except for my mother……."*

Participant 5: *"Cause I had a fear of failing in the beginning and I was just like, It was just constantly on my mind , work, work, work."*

Participant 2: *"I wanted to go back and yet I, the longer it went on, I was ah well sure they wouldn't take me, so I talked myself out of it a lot of the time, going back. And then I remember having a conversation with Niall* (her husband) *and he said if you don't do it now, you're never going to do it. I and I said Ok."*

Participant 3: *"I suppose in a way I probably didn't realise that at the time and that was more I suppose my own sort of self-esteem or whatever, thinking OH God, will I be able to do this particular job or because I haven't experience in a particular field. Em…. So, I probably created my own barrier in that sense"*

Participant 3: *"I suppose the biggest barrier, I suppose for me was the whole confidence thing, getting back em…… you know having to worm my way back in, you know"*

4.2.2 Difficulty adapting to both roles

There were numerous opinions expressed by the participants as to the difficulties they found in adapting to the role with family life and commitments. A number of factors were identified that caused them conflict such as they felt torn trying to juggle busy schedules, with some expressing concern at the lack of support and training from their employers and work colleagues, changes in technology, work practices and policies and staffing levels since they had last worked as adding to their stress levels.

Participant 3: *"No, and I think part of that was circumstances because the whole staffing in the whole nursing field I think staffing is so, is such an issue at the minute that, yeah they didn't have the time probably to give the support, they just needed bodies and numbers first to do the job"*

Participant 2: *"we arrived in one day* (laughs unbelievably) *and there was a computer there……I don't even know how to turn it on. And we didn't, that's the God's honest truth. No one came in to show us. They just assumed that we would know."*

Participant 1: *"a lot of it I self-taught myself. Ok I got a couple of days training."*

From a family perspective many of the participants felt despite their partners being very supportive and encouraging in their returning to the workplace, they felt that they were still expected to do most of the household chores reflected in the quote:

Participant 5: *"although I am out of the house working and I have kids other days, and all the rest, they still expect their dinner on the table*. (laughs) *Do You Know, it's like nearly expected that, like everything will be fine, even though mam's got an extra job, extra work."*

Many of the women expressed that they felt guilty about leaving their children despite many of them having grown children who could look after themselves. Some of the participants also recognised that due to their own perfectionist attitudes, difficulties in changing their mindset from being the main carer, they were contributing to their own anxieties and difficulties in adapting to both roles.

Participant 4: *"I see so many women sacrifice for the name of the family, because we just think that is what we are supposed to do."*

Participant 3: *"I felt guilty that I wasn't there when they come in in the evening. Em…. I'd say that part was hard, you know that, you know that the logic it was like having this battle between the logic well now nobody is young anymore. They were all old enough now to come into the house by themselves, well for the most part"*

These results show that there are a myriad of factors which contribute to women finding difficulty adapting to both roles, inside and outside the home. Lack of support and training from employers and colleagues on the work front is often seen as a huge influencing factor. However, as well as feeling that they are expected to do all the housework even though they were now out at work, this study revealed that women themselves contribute to their own stresses as they try to be superwomen, often struggling to let go of their position as the main carer in the family.

4.2.3 *Flexible Working Hours/Childcare Provision*

Within the theme of flexible working hours there was the added dimension of the need for childcare, Most of the women participants had returned to work on a part-time basis because they were unable to commit to a fulltime role due to them being the main carers for their children. Flexible working conditions were not always readily available that suited the participants abilities or schedules.

Participant 1*: "It's hard to get a job that will facilitate school hours."*

For some of the women flexible employers and work conditions enabled them to continue to work on a part-time basis to suit their current lifestyle.

Participant 3: *"No, actually they were initially because, em……I wanted to work, I could work mornings and it started at nine so, It was nine to one but because my youngest at that time was still in school, I needed to drop him to school, so I was able to negotiate starting at half nine I think, and work until half one. So, I was able to juggle it a little bit, which was great."*

Childcare did not pose a major problem as many of the participants children were now at an age where they did not need as much minding, with many having family supports rather than creche facilities providing childcare whilst they worked.

Participant 2: *"I had reared my youngest, I felt he was at a stage where I could, em, yeah, I could leave him. I wanted to stay at home and rear my kids,"*

However, each participant said they had stayed at home through their own choice as they felt they were the best carers for their children

Participant 3: *"But I don't think it was even just fitting in with culture, it was what I wanted to do too. You know I wanted to be at home."*

and that creche facilities were not widely available and location of where you lived being an important factor in provision

Participant 3: *"creche facility, there wasn't an option. No."*

The number of children also impacted their decision to return to the workplace with the participants saying that due to high costs working at an earlier stage would not have been worth the effort. The participants had between 3 and 5 children each;

Participant 5: *"You know, and then I had like five kids quick enough, so, like who would mind them?"*

When asked, there was different opinions as to whether they would have liked to work fulltime;

Participant 3: *"or just sometimes you are just getting stuck into stuff and you have to come away again. Em……So….. I suppose there are, there is a small part of me, small part, wouldn't mind working fulltime."* Whereas

Participant 5: *"Ah, full time, I don't think I'd do full time. Yeah, I don't think I'd do full time."*

Two other participants, 2 and 4, had said they had returned on a fulltime basis because they didn't feel part-time was an option offered to them at the time of their return. Both these women have since changed to part-time hours to fit in with other responsibilities. The flexibility of employers plays an important role in enabling the participants to return and remain at work after a career break. Whilst many of the participants expressed the view that they did not need creche facilities as their children were older now and they had good family supports, the majority of those interviewed stated that if there had been suitable, affordable childcare available to them they would have probably returned to the workplace sooner

although participant 2 firmly stated that she would not have returned sooner and in fact apart from financial reasons she would opt out of the workforce now if she had an option.

4.2.4 *Cultural Aspects*

There were those who believed that it was their responsibility (and they were happy with this) and some believed there was an expectation by their husbands and society to stay at home to mind the kids. Culturally it was the accepted norm that it was the woman who stayed home, although the participants expressed that they felt cultural attitudes were changing.

Participant 4: *" I think times have changed, however, I think we take it on ourselves, we are like the strong super women, that we can sacrifice this for a little while …..I see so many women sacrifice for the name of the family, because we just think that is what we are supposed to do."*

Participant 2: *"No, because in my view, was, I had the children and it was my responsibility to look after them…..So, I could stay at home, because he would have been of the mentality as well, no you stay at home if you're happy and look after the kids."*

Each participant said they had stayed at home through their own choice as they felt they were the best carers for their children

Participant 3: *"A personal choice, Yeah and because of the, the illness, or the extra needs that the twins had I didn't want anybody else taking care of them. But I don't think it was even just fitting in with culture, it was what I wanted to do too. You know I wanted to be at home."*

Another aspect within this theme was the fact that Irelands population is diversifying, there were differing accounts about how this has impacted on individuals within the workplace,

Participant 2: *"I think for a lot of our older people it can be quite daunting on them…..they are not used it, they are not used to the different cultures , they are not, they find it difficult to understand a lot of their language."*

Participant 3: *"But we are seeing a little bit, but that's good too. Everyone brings a different experience and different ideas and whatever."*

4.2.5 *Positive Aspects to Working*

The participants all expressed the opinion that despite negative feelings of anxiety at the initial stages they all found positive aspects from returning to the workplace. These included mental health benefits resulting from work being a distraction, filling a void following children going to school, a social outlet were they were not seen as only being a mam.

Participant 1: *"And plus, it's a distraction, I would've I suppose before I went to work, I would have eat, breathe and sleep kids, family, home. So, it would be hard to imagine if I didn't go back . What frame of mind I would be in."*

Participant 4: *"Absolutely, There's nothing like eating a meal on your own in work, with other adults and having a chat, you know no-one is asking you for anything."*
Widely quoted was the positive effects from being financially independent as well as finding fulfilment and enjoyment with one participant claiming that work helped her cope with a marriage breakup.

Participant 4: *"To have money again, it was brilliant. My own independence, yeah. And not to be saying, well, I think I would like to buy this, what do you think? AH ….. I hated it."* *And in referring to marriage breakup* *"If anything, work has carried me through."*

Participant 5: *"You come out feeling, gosh, you know, I made a difference today"*

4.2.6 *Women's Changes in Attitude towards the role of work*

Many of the participants expressed the opinion that as they have matured their expectations of what they wish to gain from working has changed with some feeling that although they enjoy many aspects of returning to work and feel it has been a mainly positive experience it is not their primary focus of life whereas when they were younger with less commitments work would have played a bigger role in their lives, summed up by the quote; Participant 5: *"like when I started work, it was like oh this is the be all and end all, of you know what I mean, like, and then I kind of started to think like it is only a job , what happens in my family and my house is much, much, more important than this job."*

This theme highlighted that the participants felt that they had more to offer to the workplace due to them being more mature, with less commitments to children.

 Participant 4: *"there are us ladies in our forties who have reared our children and are like come on, now take me on , I am here to work."*

Figure 1: Model of Themes and subthemes

5. Discussion

5.1 *Discussion*

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the experiences of women in Ireland on returning to the workplace following a break in their career. Do women encounter work-life conflicts? Do Women feel supported by family/peers and managers? What barriers, if any have arisen in their returning to the workplace? What do they perceive as the attitudes towards them in the workplace? Have their own attitudes changed throughout their lifespan in regards to working and do they feel that returning to work has been a positive experience for them. The semi-structured interviews of five women aged between 47 and 52 in this study found that the participants initially struggled with feelings of inadequacy and they lacked confidence and belief in themselves which resulted in some having sleepless nights when they first returned to the workplace. All the participants had taken a career break of between 9 and 20 years, all had been the main carer for their children. The issue of childcare and the need for flexible working hours and conditions was a major issue for all the individuals. Every woman interviewed expressed the view that they had difficulty adapting to the two roles for varying reasons. Other themes to emerge were cultural aspects of a diversifying workforce and changes in societal attitudes and how women's attitudes to the role of work in their lives had changed throughout the lifespan and all believed that despite the identified difficulties, returning to work was a positive experience.

5.2 *What the research found in relation to lack of confidence / belief in themselves*

In agreement with Saleena and Mavoothu (2015) this study found that all the participants expressed concerns and feelings of anxiety and fear about returning to work which supports the findings of Lemmer (1990) that women lose self-confidence during their career break. The length of career break (between 9 and 20 years) appeared to exacerbate the "daunting" feelings that many said they felt about returning to work. Previous research by

Aisenbrey, Evertsson and Grunow (2009) and Arun, Arun and Borooah (2004) identified that the longer the career break there were penalties such as job change and income losses although they did not look at the length of career break in terms of how it affected women's beliefs and confidence in their abilities. Two of the participants in this study did change type of career but loss of earnings was not discussed. Saleena and Mavoothu (2015) states there are a number of intrapersonal re-entry issues experienced by women, this study uncovered a number of factors put forward as being relevant to their feelings of inadequacy, including their level of education and family background as well as a lack of knowledge and self-esteem and general fear of the unknown as what to expect as technology had moved on since their previous employment. This shows that the experiences differ for each of the individuals and therefore there is a need for greater awareness of individual issues to ensure solutions to the issues faced by women re-entering the workplace can be found.

5.3 *What the research found on Difficulty adapting to both roles*

Chalofsky (2003) states that in today's hectic society, there may be a struggle to find balance for many women, as they continue to be the primary carers of children, in merging their personal and professional lives to achieve fulfilment and satisfaction. In this study, women were the primary carers, therefore there were a number of factors which resulted in the individuals finding difficulty adapting to the role of working outside the home. From an organizational perspective, the more flexible and understanding the employer, the individual's expressed less anxiety about returning and remaining in employment. This reflected the findings by Lanzun et al. (2010) and Lee et al. (2017) that there would be a decrease in work-family conflict with greater flexibility and support from organisations. Lack of adequate training was repeatedly reflected in the experiences of the women in this study, with many stating that they felt their colleagues did not take into consideration that they had a break in their career so they would need more support especially in the initial

period upon return to work. This highlights an area were improvements could be made at an organizational level to ease work-life conflict.

From a family perspective in concurrence with Fine-Davies (2015) the women all expressed that there partners were very supportive of their decision to return to work, however, the household duties were not shared with their male partners despite the women now working outside the home. This study identified that there was a strong sense that the women found it difficult to relinquish their role as the main carer in the home, perhaps contributing to their own anxieties and difficulties in adapting to both roles. Maybe Irish women have perpetuated this problem of how to share the household duties by refusing to let other family members do the chores as they feel "it is just handier to do it yourself sometimes" (participant 5). No previous research expressing this view was found.

5.4 *What the research found on Flexible working hours/childcare provision.*

In this study, as found in previous studies by Chalofsky (2003) and Fine-Davies (2015) mothers continue to be the primary carers for their children. The women in this study expressed that they felt that their role as primary carer hampered them from entering the workforce at an earlier time. All participants found that due to issues surrounding availability and cost of childcare as well as the number of children (all the women had between 3 and 5 children) impacted their decision to return to work. This concurs with research by Mahon (1998) that family size affects female participation.

The need for flexible working hours was closely related to childcare provision. In this study Two participants, 2 and 4, had said they had returned on a fulltime basis because they didn't feel that part-time was an option open to them at the time, both have since changed to part-time hours through choice and to suit in with other responsibilities. The flexibility of employers played an important role in enabling the participants to return and remain at work.

Whilst many of the participants expressed the view that they did not need creche facilities as their children were older now and they had good family supports, the majority of those interviewed stated that if there had been suitable, affordable childcare available to them they would have probably returned to the workplace sooner. In agreement with McGreevy (2019) who states that there may be an economic as well as demographic reason for the birth rate decline in Ireland, with high costs in childcare resulting in difficulty for women to remain in employment this study found that cost of childcare was an issue for the participants in this study.

5.5 *What the research found on Cultural Aspects*

Some of the participants believed that it was their responsibility and some believed that there was an expectation by their husbands to stay at home to mind the kids concurring with Fine-Davies (2015). Culturally it was the accepted norm that it was the woman who stayed home, although the participants expressed the view that they felt cultural attitudes were changing. Each participant said they had stayed at home through their own choice as they felt they were the best carers for their children, again a view backed up by Fine-Davies (2015). Another aspect within this theme was the fact that Irelands population is diversifying, there were differing accounts about how this has impacted on individuals within the workplace with both positive and negative views expressed. The problems in communication due to language barriers especially for the elderly was found as a negative whereas others thought that new cultures brought new ideas which was seen as a positive aspect of the diverging Irish workforce. No research looking at this aspect from an Irish perspective was found.

5.6 *What the research found on Positive aspects to working*

The participants expressed the opinion that despite negative feelings of anxiety at the initial stages they all found positive aspects from returning to the workplace. These included mental health benefits resulting from work being a distraction, filling a void following children going to school, a social outlet were they were not seen as only being a mam. Widely quoted was the positive effects from being financially independent as well as finding fulfilment and enjoyment with one participant claiming that work helped her cope with a marriage breakup. This would concur with Jahoda's (1982) latent deprivation model that as well as providing financial rewards, employment provides latent psychological benefits such as time structure, social contact, feeling useful, activity and social identity and status.

5.7 *What the research found on Women's changes in attitude to the role of work*

Many of the participants expressed the opinion that as they have matured their expectations of what they wish to gain from working has changed with some feeling that although they enjoy many aspects of returning to work and feel it has been a mainly positive experience it is not their primary focus of life whereas when they were younger with less commitments work would have played a bigger role in their lives. These findings concur with Mainiero and Sullivan's (2005) KCM which suggests that for women their primary focus in early career is Challenge, with Balance becoming more important in their mid-career and Authenticity becoming the primary focus in later career. As the participants in this study are aged 47 to 52 they are now moving from a stage where Balance is important towards a stage where Authenticity is playing a greater role. Indeed in agreement with Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) the women in this study tended to factor in the needs of their children, spouses and aging parents and their co-workers. In agreement with O'Neil and Bilmoria (2005) the participants found working a positive experience as they are entering the reinventive

contribution phase of their career. This study found that women believed that they have unique talents and abilities which come from life experiences which need to be recognized and utilized.

5.8 *Strengths and Limitations*

The strengths of this study include that the research adhered to all ethical recommendations and considerations of the Psychological Society of Ireland and ethical approval was obtained prior to commencement of the study. The design of the study was clearly stated allowing for replication of the study. A clear rationale was given to what the research wanted to find out from an Irish perspective, and will add to the under researched area of women's re-entry to the labour force, especially pertinent as women participation rates in the 45-54 age bracket has risen dramatically by 25.3% from 47.3% in 1998 to 72.6% in 2019.

The use of qualitative semi-structured interviews facilitated open discussion for the participants to reveal their thoughts and feelings about their individual experiences of returning to work. As interviews were not rigid there was an opportunity for new ideas surrounding topics to be revealed. The findings concur with previous research thus adding to the body of knowledge already in existence.

Limitations of the study include that although the sample was purposeful in interviewing 5 women relevant to the area of study, the small size would mean that the results are not generalisable and may not reflect the majority of experiences of women in Ireland especially as the participants had a higher average number of children within this sample group than is currently reported in Ireland. Also as the sample of women came from County Dublin, they may not reflect experiences in other counties within Ireland.

5.9 *Future Research*

The study identified that as the number of women participating in the labour force in Ireland has grown considerably over the last decades it is important to understand any issues that may be faced particularly following a career break. The need for flexible working conditions and childcare were identified as major obstacles in returning and staying in employment, further research could include larger populations within Irish society, perhaps on a county basis to determine if the issues found in this study are replicated across the country, different age groups could also be researched as their experiences may differ to those in the present study.

It was identified that culturally Ireland is diversifying with many different nationalities now in the workforce, however there is a gap in the research looking at issues this cohort may face in returning to work in this country.

The focus of much of the research looking at re-entering the workforce looks at the penalties in career progression and earnings, few studies look at the psychological barriers encountered by women who return to the workplace following a career break, this could warrant further research.

5.10 *Applications*

There is a need for training and support from colleagues especially at the initial phase of returning to work. There is also room for improvement in delivering flexible working conditions such as job sharing, flexible hours or working from home, although there does appear to some advancement in this area there is room for improvement.

There is also a greater need for affordable, accessible childcare provision in Ireland, studies like this current one may highlight how women who feel supported can make the transition back to the workplace and could therefore inform future policies in this area.

5.11 *Conclusions*

This study found that women continue to be the primary carers for their children. Despite dramatic changes in attitudes and women's participation rates in the workplace, with debate and discussions having moved towards work-life balances there has been a disappointing lack of change to structures within the workplace. There is a need for training and support from employers and colleagues especially at the initial phase of returning to work. There is also room for improvement in delivering flexible working conditions such as job sharing or working from home. Equality among partners in domestic activities has not materialized, but there also appears to be a reluctance by the women in this study to relinquish their role as primary carer. There is also a greater need for affordable, accessible childcare provision in Ireland, however this study found that despite the barriers women face re-entering the workplace they all found it a rewarding, positive experience. This study finds that the participants reported that their attitude to the role work plays in their lives has changed over their lifespan with many moving from issues of Balance towards seeking Authenticity supporting the tenets of the KCM (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005).

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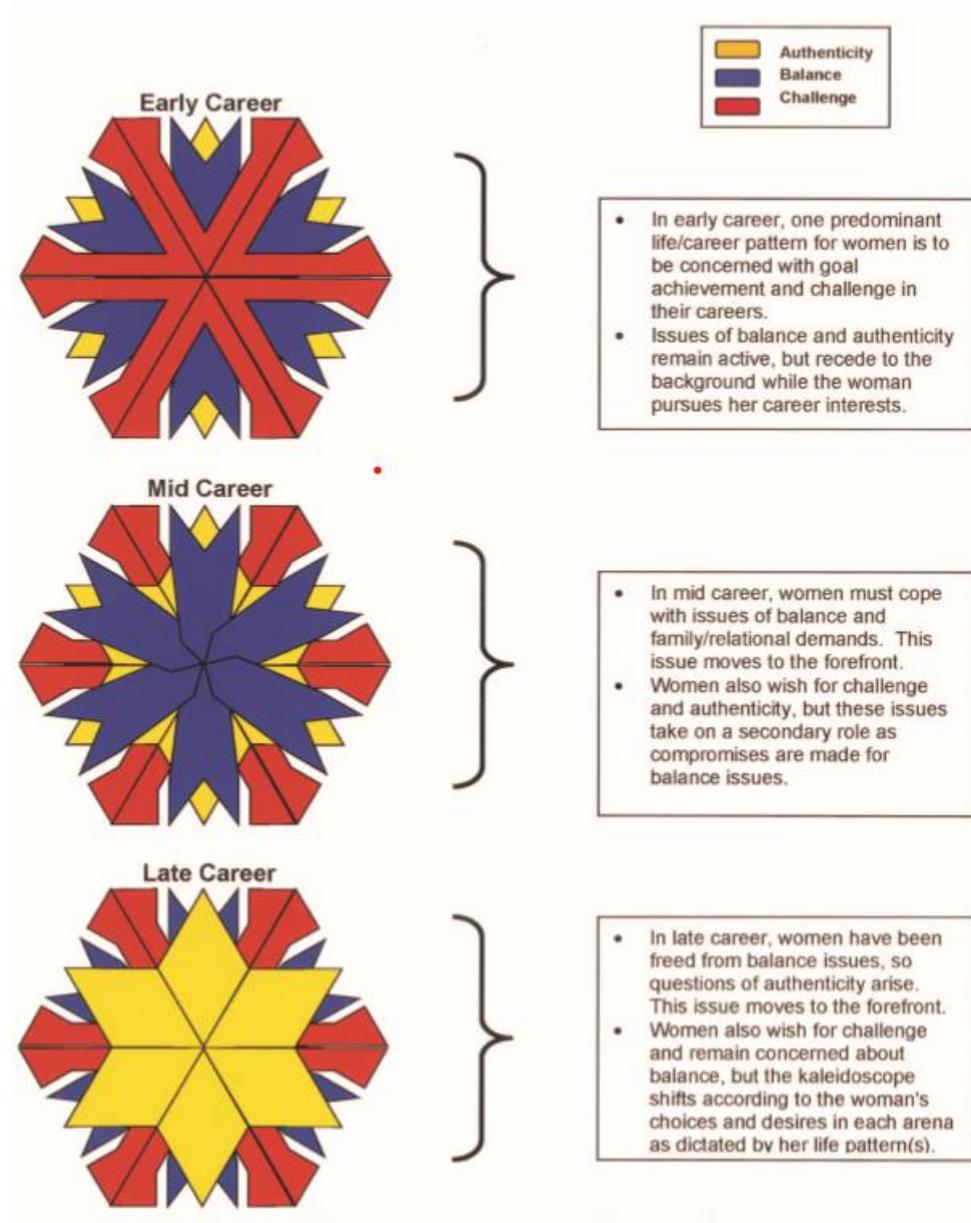
Appendices
Appendix A: ABC Model of KCM

Early Career

Authenticity
Balance
Challenge

- In early career, one predominant life/career pattern for women is to be concerned with goal achievement and challenge in their careers.
- Issues of balance and authenticity remain active, but recede to the background while the woman pursues her career interests.

Mid Career

- In mid career, women must cope with issues of balance and family/relational demands. This issue moves to the forefront.
- Women also wish for challenge and authenticity, but these issues take on a secondary role as compromises are made for balance issues.

Late Career

- In late career, women have been freed from balance issues, so questions of authenticity arise. This issue moves to the forefront.
- Women also wish for challenge and remain concerned about balance, but the kaleidoscope shifts according to the woman's choices and desires in each arena as dictated by her life pattern(s).

FIGURE 2
The ABC Model of Kaleidoscope Careers for Women

Appendix B: Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Experiences of Women in Ireland re-entering the Workplace following a career break

This study wishes to find out what are the experiences of women in Ireland who have returned to work following a break in their career.

The length of career break will not be an issue, neither will the age or race of the participant be an issue in this study.

By participating in this study the participant is aware that the interviewer will conduct an interview which will be recorded using an audio device. No video footage will be taken during the interview. The audio recordings will be destroyed one year after the research has taken place.

Every participant has the right to withdraw from the research at any time for whatever reason up to two weeks post interview. Their data will be destroyed and not used as part of the research.

While there are no direct benefits to partaking in this study, participation in studies like this may contribute to understanding the many issues women face in returning to the workplace. This may in turn bring awareness to employers as to how they can adapt/ change work policies which may help retain female involvement in the workforce. With this in mind the findings from this study will be presented as part of an examination process in Dublin Business School (DBS). A poster outlining the findings of the study will be presented within the college and reviewed by tutors and psychology students. However, no individual participant will be identified in any publication or presentation and as "direct quotes" from the interviews will be used, all care will be taken to ensure that participants' are not identified. Individuals will not be offered any monetary or other rewards for participation.

All individual information collected as part of this study, including any recordings of participants will be used for research use only. They will be stored securely and will not be publicly displayed or published without prior consent.

Contact Details

If you have any further questions about the research you can contact

Researcher: ██████ @mydbs.ie

Supervisor:

Appendix C: Guideline Questions

Guideline questions for research

Demographic Questions

What age are you?

Did you grow up in Ireland?

Are you in a relationship?

What is your level of education?

Is English your first language?

Length of time since returned to work/ Length of career Break etc.

How long is it since you previously worked?

How long ago did you return to work?

Are you in full time or part time Employment?

Why did you choose Full/part-time role?

Responsibilities

Do you have Children?

Waa it difficult to get childcare?

Are you responsible for aged parents or other family members?

Reasons for returning to work

Was the return to work your own choice?

Why did you return to work, was it for financial reward?

Was it for personal reasons? Self fulfilment?

Did you return to a similar career or change of career entirely?

Do you feel you are reaching your potential? Is there An opportunity to reach your potential in your current position?

In an ideal world what would your work situation look like?

Support for return to work from work/ family

Have you found the transition into the workplace easy, have colleagues, family been supportive of your decision?

Have you received support in training since you returned?

Do you think there is room for improvements ?

Have you a supportive partner/significant other to help with duties at home?

Do you feel you have a good balance in your work-home life?

Do you feel torn between being at work and being at home?

Do you feel that technology has changed since you last worked?

Have your employers been flexible with hours you work?

Questions on Government Policy supports for women returning to work

Do you feel the government give support to woman who wish to return to work, for example in providing childcare placements, financial support?

Would you have returned to work sooner if there was affordable childcare available.

Do you think there is a belief in Ireland that the woman's place is in the home?

Or is it acceptable that woman work in this country?

What do you think are the perceptions of women's role in Ireland?

Women's attitude Changes

Do you think your attitudes to work have changed since you were younger?

Did you find going back to work a positive experience?

Where there any negative aspects to returning to work?

Would you decide to leave work if you could or do feel that work has added to your life?

What have you found are the benefits of returning to the workplace?

Do you like your current position or would you change if you had an opportunity?

Cultural Changes

Do you see a shift in the cultural diversity in the work place.

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent Form

Experiences of Women in Ireland on return to work following a break in their career

I have read and understand the attached information leaflet regarding this study. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study with the researcher and I received satisfactory answers to all my questions.

I am aware that the interviews will be recorded on an audio device, there will be no video recording of the interview. These recordings will be destroyed one year after the interview. These recordings may not be used without my consent. I give consent for my interview to be recorded.

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason up to 2 weeks post interview and my data will be destroyed and not used as part of this research study.

I agree to take part in the study.

Participants Signature: ………………………………………………….

Participants Name in Print: ………………………………………………….

Date: ………………………………………………….

Appendix E: Debrief Letter

Debriefing for study entitled Experiences of Women in Ireland on return to work following a break in their career

Thank you for your participation in this study. The aim of this study was to gain knowledge about the experiences of women living in Ireland on their return to work following a break in their career. Different studies have reported the experiences of woman in countries throughout the world however the researcher was unable to find any research relating to the experiences of women in Ireland. Your participation is not only greatly appreciated by the researchers involved, but the data collected may help in determining the issues which arise for women wishing to re-enter the workforce. Such findings may help employers to develop strategies to ensure that they can attract and retain valuable female talent in the future.

The recordings of your data will be destroyed one year after the study has been completed and the transcripts will be kept for five years. You may withdraw your consent to have your data included in the study up to two weeks post interview, however after this time your data will be used but your name will not be disclosed at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study please do not hesitate to contact the researcher on   **@mydbs.ie** or their supervisor

Details of the addresses and telephone numbers of the offices of the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) with the responsibility for statutory employment rights, and other bodies are as follows:

Citizens Information Centre

By phone: 0761 07 4000. In person: by visiting your nearest Citizens Information Centre, please check on **www.citizensinformation.ie** for details of your nearest centre.

NERA National Employment Rights Authority,

O'Brien Road, Carlow.

Telephone: (059) 917 8800,

Fax: (059) 917 8912

Log onto **www.workplacerelations.ie**