

**A Study of Perceived Stress,
Job Satisfaction and
Work-Life Conflict
Among Early Years Educators**

Simone Jones

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Supervisor: Rebecca Maguire

Head of Department: Dr. S. Eccles

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Department of Psychology

DBS School of Arts

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore relationships between perceived stress, job satisfaction, work-life and life-work conflict among early years educators. 70 participants from a number of early years education services took part in the study. Results indicated that early years educators are most satisfied with the nature of work and their supervisor and are least satisfied with their opportunity for promotion and the pay they receive. Perceived stress was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with work-life conflict and life-work conflict. Perceived stress also predicted job satisfaction, work-life conflict and life-work conflict. The development of interventions to reduce stress levels can aid a work-life balance, increase job satisfaction which can only benefit the children in the early years education services.

Introduction

In this current study the relationship between perceived stress, work-life life-work conflict and job satisfaction among early years educators in Ireland is investigated further. A number of demographic variables will also be explored such as age, education, part time or full time work and the type of curriculum used. The role of early years educators in Ireland can be divided into two sections the structural/organisational level and the relational level. At the structural or organisational level the early years educator is responsible for creating a safe learning environment enriched with age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate artefacts for children. At the relational level, the responsibility of the early years educator is to engage the child's learning from the environment through guidance, assistance and encouragement (Carswell, 2002), along with meeting the individual, educational and other needs of the children and their families as guided by the HSE revised preschool regulations (DoHC, 2006), the national quality framework for early childhood education; Síolta (CECDE, 2006), the national curriculum framework; Aistear (NCCA, 2009) and the services individual chosen curriculum. Regulation 5 in the HSE revised preschool regulations (DoHC, 2006) in early years in Ireland, suggests that the core areas of practice required to meet the whole child perspective are key workers who provide a consistent relationship with the child while in an early years setting. (Early Childhood Ireland, 2011) Therefore with perceived stress being linked to mood changes, mental health and counterproductive workplace behaviour among many others to be considered and how job satisfaction level is an important factor influencing the health of the worker, (Faragher, Cass and Cooper, 2005) along with other areas, perceived stress and job satisfaction are appropriate measures to use for this study based on the role of the early years educator. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory of development the experience of a child in day care, in the classroom, or in the informal peer group may change his pattern of activities and interaction with parents or siblings in the home,

or vice versa, with consequent implications for learning and development. And so failure to carry out these duties or lack of due care could result in serious accidents or incidents, fewer quality adult-child interactions and a lower standard of education and care which could impact on the development of the child at the most crucial time in their lives; the early years.

There are many different types of early years education provision in Ireland; private services or community based projects using different Department of Children and Youth Affairs schemes such as the ECCE scheme, a free preschool year for children aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 1 month, the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) scheme providing lower cost childcare through government subvention for parents who meet certain criteria for example a parent in receipt of certain social welfare payments or a medical card and the Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) scheme, which is a scheme designed to support the childcare needs of participants in training and educational courses operated by FÁS and the VEC. In the region of the study in 2011, there were 244 services using the ECCE scheme providing 3849 preschool places for children, 38 services using the CCS scheme providing 195 childcare places and 85 services using the CETS scheme providing 207 childcare places. The type of education and care provided are full day care, part day care and sessional preschool with each one providing a number of different types of educational curriculum. Some of the curricula used in these services are the Montessori approach, the HighScope approach, the Play-based curriculum and the Naíonra among others. The Montessori curriculum was devised by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1907. It was originally developed for children with special needs who were in the hospital where Dr. Montessori worked. The main idea of the Montessori method is that every child is treated with respect, given freedom within the limits of a carefully structured environment and allowed to develop naturally at their own pace by following a set programme of tasks or

exercises. They learn everyday life skills such as dressing themselves among many other subjects such as mathematics, history and geography. (St. Nicholas Montessori Society, 2012) The HighScope curriculum was devised in 1970 to carry on the work that Dr. David P. Weikart began in 1962. The curriculum content addresses all areas of development and both the educators and the children are actively involved in the classroom. The principles that guide the HighScope curriculum are the daily routine, the learning environment, adult-child interaction and assessment with active learning being central to these four principles. (Epstein, 2007) The Play-based curriculum is used to aid the child through their developmental progress. This is done in a supervised environment encouraging free play to help with decision making, independence and problem solving. There are usually a lot of art and craft, home corner, dress up, outdoor play, and music activities. (Schooldays.ie, 2012) The Naíonra is a playgroup under the guidance and supervision of a Naíonra Leader. It is run solely through the medium of Irish. The staff structures the environment to ensure that all facets of the child's holistic development are catered for, while giving the child the opportunity to acquire Irish naturally through the medium of play, which is this particular age group's chief method of learning. (Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta, 2012) Every early years educator regardless of the curriculum used, fundamentally has the same responsibilities to children and so a good level of health and well-being is needed and this includes monitoring stress levels.

“Stress is a specific response the body makes to all non-specific demands...no matter what the situation is, when the demand we perceive exceeds the resources we think we have, the body and mind are aroused and geared up either to fight the change or flee from the situation to avoid harm.” (Patel, 1996 p.3) Stress is also a negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological, cognitive and behavioural changes that are directed either toward altering the stressful event or accommodating its effects. (Taylor, 1998) According to Cannon, (1932) when we perceive that we are in danger, the

primitive response mechanism is activated. This is the fight or flight response, to stay and fight or to run away (Ogden, 2007). The best known biological theory is that of Hans Selye called the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). He suggested that our bodies constantly strive to maintain a stable and consistent state called homeostasis and the body attempts to restore this homeostasis by means of an adaptive response. This theory consists of 3 stages; alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion. During the first stage –alarm reaction, this is when a stressor first occurs. The body responds with physiological changes. If this is prolonged then stage two is set in motion, resistance. Resistance is where the body tries to sustain homeostasis and there is then a sensitivity to stress. If a high level of stress continues than stage three is reached, the stage of exhaustion. At this stage the body can no longer resist the original stressor and an affective experience can occur such as depression. (Selye, 1956)

The life events theory was developed to examine stress and stress-related changes as a response to life experiences. Holmes and Rahe (1967) developed the schedule of recent experiences (SRE), which provided respondents with an extensive list of possible life changes or life events. These ranged in supposed objective severity from events such as ‘death of a spouse’ to a ‘change in eating habits’. (Ogden, 2007) As mentioned earlier with the general adaptation syndrome, the body responds to an event that is perceived as threatening or potentially dangerous with physiological changes. This is the primary stress response and is triggered in the body by the action of the Hypothalamus. The body, its organs and systems are put on red alert and a complex series of chemical and physiological reactions result. (Whelan, 1993, p.15) These series of chemical and physiological reactions involves the nervous system and the endocrine system. This then has an effect on the body through the biopsychosocial model. The biological effects of stress on the physical body can be muscular tension, backache, tension headaches, migraine, sweating, dry mouth, high blood pressure, indigestion, peptic ulcer, colds, coughs, skin rashes and acne. Research by Croyley and

Steptoe (2005), states that higher life stress is associated with greater reporting of physical symptoms of illness (Ogden, 2007). The psychological effects of stress on mental health can be anxiety, depression, mood swings, low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness and panic. Bartlett (1998) points out that there is immense empirical support for the belief that stress impacts adversely on physiological and mental health. The social effects of stress on the individuals behaviour is affected then for some by insomnia, comfort eating, an increase in smoking, drinking and drug use and accident proneness. In a study by Freeman and Gil (2004) of college women, a higher stress level was associated with the increased risk of same day binge eating.

The immune system is the body's defence against disease. It operates by producing certain types of cell that operate against foreign organisms (e.g. bacteria, poisons, viruses, parasites) and abnormal cells (e.g. cancer cells) in the blood and lymphatic systems. (Morrison & Bennett, 2006) At every moment, every cell in the body is hard at work nourishing itself, defending itself and repairing damage. But under great stress, the cells actually stop this process of renewal as they are called upon to perform a range of other activities to meet situational demands. (Chopra, 1998) The longer the stress, the more the immune system shifts from potentially adaptive changes to potentially harmful ones, first in cellular immunity and then in broader immune function. (Hales, 2009) Due to ethical considerations in the design of experiments, it is difficult to say that stress causes illness. Johnston (2002) however argues that stress does cause illness through two interrelated mechanisms and developed his model of the stress–illness link which involves chronic and acute processes. (Morrison & Bennett, 2006) This can then impact on the early years educator as there could be an increase in unhealthy behaviour, illness and mental health problems. As an early years educator, the individual would have to manage the physical, psychological and social effects of stress and operate at optimum level in order to provide a high standard of

education and care to children, as mentioned earlier the early years educator plays an important role in the child's vital early years of development. If staff are out sick or inconsistently present, then this potentially impacts on the child.

Lazarus' (1966) concept of stress involves a transaction between the person and their environment. It involves the act of appraisal, both primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal is the initial appraisal of the event itself and secondary appraisal is the individual themselves. With primary appraisal, there are three kinds of possible stressor: those that pose harm, those that threaten and those that set a challenge. If we do not perceive an event to be harmful, threatening or challenging then we ignore it. However if we do perceive it to be harmful, threatening or challenging then secondary appraisal comes into effect. This is where the individual assesses resources and abilities they have to cope with the stressor. This is then the individuals' perception of how stressful the situation is and their individual resources and coping strategies they have to draw on to deal with the situation effectively. "Coping is anything a person does to reduce the impact of a perceived or actual stressor." (Morrison & Bennett, 2006 p.338) There are two main coping styles or strategies; problem focused and emotional focused. Problem focused coping is based on problem-solving either how to reduce the stressor or increase resources to deal with it. For the early years educator some strategies can be planning, discussing the stressor with a colleague or at team meetings, seeking practical or informational advice such as extra specialised training and confronting the stressor itself. Emotion focused coping is based on regulating or managing the emotional response connected with the stressor. For the early years educator some strategies may be seeing the stressor in a more positive light, venting and seeking support of a supervisor or manager and depending on the organisation, work related counselling may be an option. It is helpful to have education on stress and stress management for staff and also strategies in place for a situation that is perceived as stressful such as short

breaks for staff or relief time and a structured support system in place such as monthly staff support and supervision. There are a number of other factors which influence a person's ability to cope with a given situation. These are personality, self-efficacy and locus of control and external resources and social support. Social support is important as according to Taylor (2007) the absence of social support is a stressor.

Occupational stress is operationalized as a state of cognitive or physiological arousal or 'readiness for action' and as such, variability in the performance in individuals under stress has been attributed to differential mental and physical workload capacities (Perrewé & Ganster, 2003). Occupational stress can involve numerous stressors such as new job pressures, role pressures, an unsupportive or critical work supervisor or difficulties with work relationships. According to Gummer (1996); Weinberg and Creed, (2000) and Zeider and Endler, (1996), occupational stress has consistently been related to employee well-being, psychological distress and negative health outcomes. (Gellis, 2002; Revicki & May, 1985) Much resistance is met when facing the issue of job stress in the early years educator, as the implications are far broader than most would like to admit. It can bring systems face to face with change, when they may be more comfortable if left unchallenged all the while the ultimate beneficiaries of change would be the children. (Whitehead, 1984)

Work overload and handling relationships with staff are the two main sources of occupational stress that appear in many of the multivariate analyses as predictors of job dissatisfaction and mental ill health. (Cooper & Kelly, 1993) Perceptions of workplace stress often result in counterproductive workplace behaviours (CWB's) (Barrick & Ryan, 2003) and perceived work stress has been linked to withdrawal (Leiter & Robichaud, 1997) and sabotage (Storms & Spector, 1987) as ways of coping. These ways of coping would be detrimental within in the role of the early years educator and so policy makers and employers need to hold this information in high regard and aim to provide the possible supports as previously mentioned.

One way to measure stress is the Perceived Stress Scale devised by Cohen, Kamarack and Mermelstein, (1983). This is a 14 item questionnaire and refers to the subjective appraisal of events occurring within a one-month time frame. An example being ‘in the last month how often have you felt nervous and stressed’ and this is then rated using a likert scale of 0-4. Perceived stress is the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful (Cohen, *et al.* 1983). Perceived stress is affected by both daily hassles and by the availability of coping resources. Pratt (1978) and Kyriacou (1989) found perceived stress to be positively linked to experienced stress and mental ill-health. (Moriarty, Edmonds, Blatchford and Martin, 2001) Williams, (2003) suggests that full-time workers are significantly more likely than part-time workers to cite stress triggers for working too many hours among other triggers.

The concept of work or a job may once have been about an activity in which the person receives payment but in more recent times the concept centres more on an activity directed to valued goals. It is vital that a person is satisfied with their job as “the single most reliable predictor of a long life is satisfaction with one’s job” (Schultz and Schultz, 2006, p.6). Job satisfaction can have many meanings for different people. Hoppcock (1935) suggests that job satisfaction is a combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person to say “I am satisfied with my job.” (Kakoli, 2008) Job satisfaction as Locke (1976) describes, refers to a single individual and his/her job situation, addressing past and present situations (MacDonald & MacIntyre, 1997) and it is the degree to which a person reports satisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic features of the job. (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979) Intrinsic job satisfaction covers people’s affective reactions to job features that are important to the work itself such as variety and opportunity to use one’s skills whereas extrinsic job satisfaction are features external to the work itself such as pay, and working conditions. (Stride, Wall & Catley, 2008) The factors involved in the cause of

job satisfaction to be considered are pay and benefits, promotion, leadership, working conditions, co-workers or colleagues and the job itself. With pay there are two connections between pay and satisfaction; the first being, whether the financial reward for a job is regarded as adequate and, the second being, whether it is considered to be reasonable compared to the pay received by other people. (Rollinson, 2004) In early years education in Ireland at present, overall the pay is low in comparison to other teaching professions such as primary and secondary education as early years education is not part of the Department of Education system. In a study by Phillips, Howes and Whitebrook, (1991) with early years educators and job satisfaction, results show that there was low satisfaction with wages and wages were the most negative predictor of staff turnover.

With fringe benefits, these are benefits or perks that come with the job and which equates to a financial reward, for example, these can be pensions, medical insurance or petrol allowance. Fringe benefits are significant positive determinants of job satisfaction, according to Artz (2008). With promotion this is an increase in rank or position in a job which may be a form of appraisal or recognition of hard work. An opportunity for an early years educator for promotion would usually be to room supervisor, assistant manager or manager and this can depend on the individual services and the hierarchy they have within their system. A promotion may include higher pay, benefits and may change the role in the workplace and so the level of satisfaction may depend on the system within the organisation. However if a staff member does not get a promotion or pay increase they may have been expecting then this could affect their mood and so job satisfaction and organisational commitment could be affected and in turn could have an impact on the child. With leadership it is becoming more evident that leadership as opposed to micro management is a determinant of job satisfaction and motivation. (McKenna, 2000) With working conditions, this is important as according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs the individual must have their needs met at different levels in

order to develop and be motivated to reach self-actualisation. The basic level of need is psychological ones such as food, warmth and shelter. (Maslow, 1943, 1954) His theory was never intended for use in the world of work however in more recent times it is possible if an employee's needs are not being met that they may find another job in which their needs can be met. With co-workers or colleagues, it can be important to create and have good relationships between colleagues for social support as mentioned earlier the absence of social support is a stressor. Regular staff/team meetings which provide opportunities for communication centring on child guidance and staff development, foster satisfaction and indirectly buffer against emotional exhaustion according to findings of a study by Stremmel and Benson, (1993). The job itself has a number of factors to be considered such as the skill involved, the challenge from the job and understanding of the job. People tend to prefer jobs which include a variety of tasks, the opportunity to use and develop skills and abilities, the freedom to manage one's own workload, and the opportunity to receive constructive feedback on job performance. (Capon, 2003)

Dissatisfaction refers to the condition or feeling of being displeased or unsatisfied; discontent. If job satisfaction is a combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person to say "I am satisfied with my job." Then job dissatisfaction could be thought of as the combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person to say "I am dissatisfied with my job", however "job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not exact opposites" according to Capon (2003). It is suggested by Farrell (1983), that there are four theoretical categories--exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect as responses to job dissatisfaction. Exit and voice are active responses, whereas neglect and loyalty are passive responses. With exit this is the least effective action for the company or organisation as the individual leaves and does not give solutions to changes. However under certain conditions, job dissatisfaction may actually lead to creative

performance which ultimately benefits the organisation. (Zhou & George, 2001). This can happen when an individual is not happy with certain aspects of their job and may use problem solving techniques or come up with new ideas as to how the situation may work better for them. While according to Aamodt (2004), when employees are dissatisfied or not committed to their organisation they are more likely to miss work and leave their job. (Cerveny & Villegas, 2004) Commitment to the job and intention to leave are considered to be outcomes of job satisfaction according to Igbaria and Guimaraes (1993) and high stress and job dissatisfaction levels lead to high rates of staff turnover according to Phillips, Howes & Whitebrook, 1991; Whelan, 1993 (Fenech, 2007). This then again for the early years educator is important as missing work or an inconsistent key worker is not the ideal situation for the child. For many jobs when a staff member is not present, the task involved may be completed by another similarly skilled staff member, or by a replacement or cover staff member or work can be left build up until the employee returns from work however this is not the case within the role of an early years educator, there may be a replacement or cover staff member brought in but it is the consistency of the key worker which is required.

In trying to change job dissatisfaction to satisfaction, Messmer (2005) proposes the employer take note of the following; the opportunity for intellectual challenge and training regardless of it relating to the specific job, to offer a work-life balanced approach and to provide on-going feedback to the individual on their performance. (Matthewman, Rose & Hetherington, 2009) For the early years educator this could be in the form of being actively part of a team where decisions on the daily running of the room/service are collaborate, continuous professional development by being involved in training on current issues such as child protection updates and monthly key worker meetings or staff support and supervision. Herzberg's two factor theory states that there are two types of need which influence job satisfaction, hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors can lead to job dissatisfaction if

not well managed and can be job security, working condition and pay for example.

Motivators can produce feelings of job satisfaction such as individual expression and striving for growth as examples. (Kremer, Sheehy, Reilly, Trew & Muldoon, 2003). In order to promote positive job experiences, Herzberg developed the theory of vertical loading; this is the concept of the individual worker having more control over what and how they do their job. However empirical evidence does not support the theory. In a study by Ryan, Smerek & Peterson, (2007) the results offer inconclusive support of Herzberg's theory although the work itself is the strongest predictor of job satisfaction after controlling for both personal and job characteristics. One way to measure job satisfaction is the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS, Spector, 1985) which is a nine facet subscale survey, based on 4 items. The nine subscales are; Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe benefits, Contingent rewards, Operating conditions, Co-workers, Nature of work and Communication. An example being, "I enjoy my co-workers" rated on a likert scale of 1-6. It is believed according to Baron, (1986); Maghradi, (1999) that satisfaction at work may influence various aspects of work such as efficiency, productivity, absenteeism, turnover rates and intention to quit, and finally employees' well-being. (Tsigilis, Zachopoulou and Grammatikopoulos, 2006)

According to Clark, Oswald and Warr, (1996) the youngest and oldest workers have greater job satisfaction. The youngest worker may be more satisfied as being new to the workforce they may not have high expectations. Job satisfaction being higher the older the worker is, may be to do with more life experience and the time to work out what jobs they like. The tenure or length of time in the job could be a factor as the longer the individual worker is in a job, the more familiar and comfortable the individual becomes with the job the more satisfied with their job they are. Another factor may be that the older individual may be near retirement. It would be thought that the more educated the employee, the more satisfied with their job they would be however education has its limitations. Additional education

results in lower job satisfaction according to Bender & Heywood (2004) and better educated employees are often rated as less productive. (Berg, 1970) This may be to do with the more education the employee has the more expectations of the work the employee has. When the job does not meet the expectations of the worker, then job dissatisfaction may occur. Over education has been linked to several outcome variables such as wages, job satisfaction, training participation or mobility. However there is no uniform way of measuring over education. (Verhaest & Omey, 2006) Training implications for job satisfaction as previously mentioned, regardless of it being related to the job, is a way of increasing job satisfaction. Training related to the job can improve performance as the employee has more knowledge and confidence to carry out the work. The higher the job satisfaction the more the employee perceives access to training opportunities and are more committed to their organisation. (Bartlett, 2001)

According to Kalleberg (1977), there is evidence to link the degree of satisfaction with work to the quality of one's life outside the work role, especially ones physical and mental health. Work-life conflict is an imbalance in work-life demands, role overload, role interference and role overspill. (Slideshare, 2009) Work-life life-work conflicts can be bi-directional: employment demands may interfere with family responsibilities, or personal and family demands may interfere with employment. For example, a chronically ill child may increase a parent's absenteeism on the job, or long hours at work might make it difficult to attend family functions or complete housework. (Jung Jang & Zippay, 2009) Therefore tensions associated with managing the demands of employment and home life may have negative effects on mental and physical health, as well as family and job satisfaction. Bartolome and Evans (1980) acknowledged that family experiences have an impact on work, but proposed that work experiences are more likely to influence family. Although work intrudes on family on a daily basis, family affects work only in extreme circumstances such

as career change and life decision. (Leiter & Durup, 1996) Work-life balance interventions are interventions which help promote flexibility of work-life and home-life. These interventions are predominantly driven by the EU and Irish legislation, employment law on working time and different types of leave such as annual, parental, adoptive and carer's leave. These are classed as statutory compliances. For other leave such as sick leave and flexible working arrangements it is up to the individual employer. In the early years education sector, adequate pay is an issue as previously mentioned. As funding is an issue, affordability in many services of sick pay may play a role in not being included in the individual's contract and so staff may come to work sick as they cannot afford to take time off. This then puts added pressure on staff not to be sick but also to come to work sick and so may spread infections around the workplace including to the children and this does not promote a healthy working environment. In a study by Gröpel and Kuhl (2009) of work-life balance and subjective well-being, results suggest that perceived sufficiency of the time available for work and social life predicts the level of well-being only if the individual's needs are fulfilled within that time. An increase in interactions with empathetic and supportive persons of varying hierarchical rank at the workplace may serve to reduce stress experienced in the family role. (Leaptrott & McDonald, n.d.) When work-life balance was first considered, workers who were parents were mainly considered with 'family-friendly' measures, this has since changed to include non-parents with other considerations such as study leave or career break leave for example. In a study by Galinsky, Bond and Friedman (1996), employees who were parents valued different benefits and workplace policies than non-parents. This could relate to the new concept of term-time leave some employers are introducing which allows employees to take leave during periods when their children are on holidays from school, for example, during the summer months. Kilgallon, Malone and Lock (2008) found early childhood teachers' students, work colleagues, educational setting and attitudes, beliefs and

pedagogical practice contributed to their sustainment, as did their ability to maintain personal well-being and a life-work balance. One way to measure work-life life-work conflict is the Work-Life Life-Work Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian, 1996). This is a ten item questionnaire; with five items for Work-Life Conflict and five items for Life-Work Conflict, an example being “The demands of my personal life interfere with work related duties” and is scored on likert scale from 1-7.

Upon reviewing research studies that examine perceived stress, job satisfaction and work-life life-work conflict among early years educators, much research in the area involves the quality provision and best practice guidelines to working with young children, such as adult-child interactions among many others, however very little actually focuses in on job satisfaction and employers regarding intrinsic satisfaction such as employee well-being and extrinsic satisfaction such as rate of pay, physical working conditions and hours. Previous research in the EPPNI study (1997-2004) and EPPE study (2003-2008), results show the quality of provision for a pre-school child in Northern Ireland and England is likely to be affected by staff qualifications and training (Department of Education, 2006; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2004) however again intrinsic and extrinsic factors were not considered.

Therefore the aim of this study is to investigate whether there is a relationship between perceived stress levels, job satisfaction and work-life life-work conflict in the early years education sector. This could help policy makers and employers to understand and improve on working conditions, the value of early years educators as professionals and a work-life balanced organisation which could lead to improving or enhancing the work ethic for early years educators and in turn enhance the quality and conditions for the earliest years of a child’s life while attending an early years setting.

This study is a correlational design. SPSS 18 will be used to input and compute the data. Descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviations will be conducted for trends within the data. Inferential statistics will be conducted to include a correlation coefficient to explore relationships between perceived stress, job satisfaction and work-life life-work conflict. A scattergram will be drawn to determine which exact test to run e.g. a Pearson correlation. A Regression analyses will be used to determine predictors for job satisfaction. A number of early years educators in a number of early year's education services in the Tallaght West area of Dublin will be surveyed.

Hypotheses:

It is hypothesised that;

1. Early years educators with higher perceived stress will have lower job satisfaction.
2. Early years educators with higher perceived stress will have higher work-life conflict.
3. Early years educators with higher job satisfaction will have lower work-life conflict.
4. The youngest and oldest early years educator will have higher job satisfaction.
5. Early years educators working full-time will have higher perceived stress.
6. The higher the qualification the lower the job satisfaction.

Method

Participants

There were 70 participants, 2 males and 68 females. The youngest participant was 19 years old and the oldest participant was 59 years old ($M=35.05$, $SD=9.91$). These were early years educators from a number of early years services in Tallaght West working either part time ($n=42$) or full time ($n=28$). There was a mix of service type involved in this study. Some services were sessional, part day and full day care services using differing educational curricula.

Materials

All instruments were self-administered, paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The questionnaire devised by the researcher was based on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS, Cohen et al. 1983), the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS, Spector, 1985) and the Work-Life Life-Work Conflict Scale (Netemeyer et al. 1996). The PSS (Cohen et al. 1983) is a 14 item questionnaire which refers to the subjective appraisals of events occurring within a one-month time frame, see appendix Item C. It has some of its items written in each direction--positive and negative. The items were scored from 0 to 4, on a likert scale with 0 being "never" and 4 being "very often". Items 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 13 scored in the reverse direction (0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0) and summed with the other negatively worded items. Scores range from 0 to 56. Higher scores indicated higher perceived stress. The JSS (Spector, 1985) is a nine facet subscale survey, based on 4 items; it has some of its items written in each direction--positive and negative, see appendix Item D. Each item was scored from 1 to 6 on a likert scale with 1 being "disagree strongly" and 6 being "agree strongly". Scores on each of nine facet subscales, based on 4 items each, can range from 4 to 24; while scores for total job satisfaction, based on the sum of all 36 items, can range from 36 to 216. High scores on the

scale represent job satisfaction, so the scores on the negatively worded items were reversed before summing with the positively worded into facet or total scores. Some items were missing, 26 out of 70 participants scores on total job satisfaction could not be summed and so the researcher followed the procedure as stated in the instructions which was to make an adjustment otherwise the score would have been too low. The mean score per item for the individual was computed and that mean was substituted for the missing items. The Work-Life Life-Work Conflict Scale (Netemeyer et al. 1996) which is a ten item questionnaire is scored on a likert scale of 1-7 with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 7 being “strongly agree”, see appendix Item F. There are five items for work-life conflict and five items for life-work conflict. Higher scores indicate higher work-life conflict and life-work conflict. Also demographic data such as age, education and special training, if the person works full or part time and if the person works in a community based or private setting is included. A letter giving information about the researcher, the research being carried out and information about rights of the participant to withdraw at any time was attached to the front of the questionnaire. A car was necessary to distribute and collect the questionnaires to and from the early year’s services.

Design

This study was a correlational design. The predictor variable was perceived stress, work-life and life-work conflict and the criterion variable was job satisfaction. A number of demographic variables such as age, working part time or full time, education, and specialised training were also explored.

Procedure

The researcher contacted the Tallaght West Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) and asked for access to their database on early years services in the Tallaght West area. This

information was sent through email to the researcher. The researcher then phoned a number of early year's services on the database and explained the research to the service owner or manager. Verbal consent to access the early years staff was obtained at this time. A letter from Dublin Business School to these early years' services was devised and distributed to each service by the researcher. A letter confirming consent to carry out research was then obtained from the early years services. A phone call was made to each service arranging a suitable date and time for drop off and collection of the questionnaires. Due to time constraints of the services and the researcher in the lead up to Christmas, some questionnaires were gathered in December while the rest were gathered at the end of January. The researcher made a note of December questionnaires and January questionnaires with an idea to explore relationships with this variable with others, this idea evolved only by chance as the data was being distributed.

Due to time constraints of staff working directly with children, some services arranged for the questionnaires to be dropped off and left with the manager with the researcher arranging a deadline and date for collection. While other services allowed the researcher to speak to the staff in each of the rooms of the early years service and leave questionnaires with them again giving a deadline and date for collection. Other services arranged a time before a staff meeting for the researcher to speak to all staff, distribute and collect the questionnaires at the same time. Whilst speaking to the staff, the researcher explained what the research was about and how to fill out the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviations was conducted for trends within the data. A scattergram was drawn to determine which exact test to run. The statistical test employed in the analysis was a Pearson correlation coefficient to explore relationships

between perceived stress, job satisfaction and work-life life-work conflict along with other demographic variables. A T-test was used to explore relationships between two groups such as working part-time or full-time and job satisfaction. An ANOVA was conducted to explore relationships between more than two groups such as staff qualifications and perceived stress and a Regression analyses was conducted to assess if any variable predicted another variable.

Results

In regards to perceived stress, job satisfaction and work-life life-work conflict, Table 1 displays descriptive statistical data; the means and standard deviations for job satisfaction and the nine subscales within this; pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, conditions, co-workers, nature of work. Perceived stress, work-life conflict and life-work conflict are also included.

Table 1

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Total job satisfaction	70	152.07	24.38
Pay	70	14.13	4.45
Promotion	70	12.63	4.16
Supervision	70	20.66	3.69
Fringe benefits	70	14.24	5.24
Rewards	70	16.86	4.73
Conditions	70	15.61	3.46
Co-workers	70	19.49	3.87
Nature of work	70	20.66	3.65
Communication	70	17.80	4.48
Total perceived stress	65	24.95	7.07
Work-life conflict	60	11.93	8.09
Life-work conflict	68	10.22	6.88

With regard to Table 1, the participants overall have a moderate to high level of job satisfaction, ($M=152.07$, $SD= 24.38$) considering the scale range for this measure is 36 to 216.

In relation to the nine subscales of job satisfaction; Pay, ($M=14.13$, $SD=4.45$) 71% of participants are low to moderately satisfied with their pay, Promotion, ($M=12.63$, $SD=4.16$) 83% are low to moderately satisfied with their opportunity for promotion, Supervision, ($M=20.66$, $SD=3.69$) 83% are high in satisfaction with their supervisor, Fringe Benefits, ($M=14.24$, $SD=5.24$) 63% are low to moderately satisfied with the fringe benefits they receive, Rewards, ($M=16.86$, $SD=4.73$) 51% are highly satisfied with the rewards they receive, Conditions, ($M=15.61$, $SD=3.46$) 64% are low to moderately satisfied with their working conditions, Co-workers, ($M=19.49$, $SD=3.87$) 79% are highly satisfied with the people they work with, Nature of Work, ($M=20.66$, $SD=3.65$) 87% are highly satisfied while 13% are moderately satisfied with the nature of work that they do, Communication, ($M=17.80$, $SD= 4.48$) 60% are highly satisfied with the communication within their service.

Overall Supervision and Nature of work show the highest job satisfaction meaning participants are most satisfied with their supervisor and the nature of work that they do; the education and care of young children, while participants are least satisfied with their opportunity for promotion and the pay that they receive.

The participants overall have moderate levels of Perceived Stress, ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$) considering the scale range of this measure is 0 to 56.

In terms of Work-Life Conflict ($M= 11.93$, $SD=8.09$) participants overall are low in Work-Life Conflict meaning that participants jobs do not interfere with their home life.

In regard to Life-Work Conflict, ($M=10.22$, $SD=6.88$) participants overall are low in Life-Work Conflict meaning that participants home life does not impact greatly on their work.

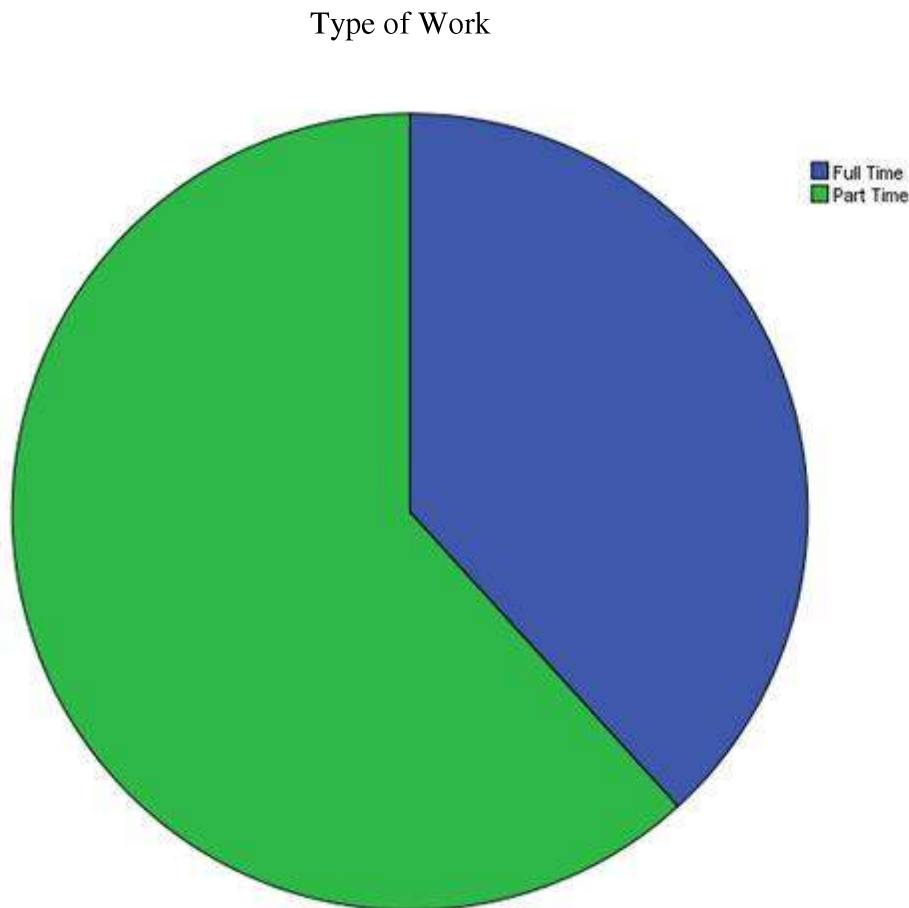


Figure 1 Type of Work

Figure 1 shows information on the type of work of participants; part-time ($n=42$) and full-time ($n=26$). Table 2 in the appendix shows participants who work full-time have a higher mean score of job satisfaction ($M=153.12$, $SD= 22.80$), higher perceived stress ($M=25.95$, $SD=6.95$) and work-life conflict ($M=13.46$, $SD=8.49$) than those who work part-time, while those who work part-time have a higher mean score of life-work conflict ($M=10.93$, $SD=7.92$). Table 3 displays statistical information on the type of service the participant works in and job satisfaction (JS), perceived stress (PS), and work-life conflict (WLC).

Table 3

Type of Service

Service Type	N	%	JS	PS	WLC
Full day	32	46	147.28	25.11	12.48
Part day	2	3	131.50	30.00	8.00
Morning Session only	3	4	146.33	20.33	9.00
Morning and afternoon session	26	37	158.42	25.24	11.05
Part day and sessional	4	6	153.00	25.50	18.33
Missing	3				

In regards to Table 3, participants who work in a service providing both a morning and an afternoon session are high in job satisfaction and have the highest mean score of job satisfaction among the other service types. Participants who work in part day care have the lowest job satisfaction and work-life conflict and the highest perceived stress of all the other service types. Participants who work in a combined part day and sessional service have the highest work-life conflict. However the numbers in these groups are low, therefore if we compare full day, 47% and morning and afternoon session 37%, the full day service has a higher work-life conflict than the morning and afternoon session.

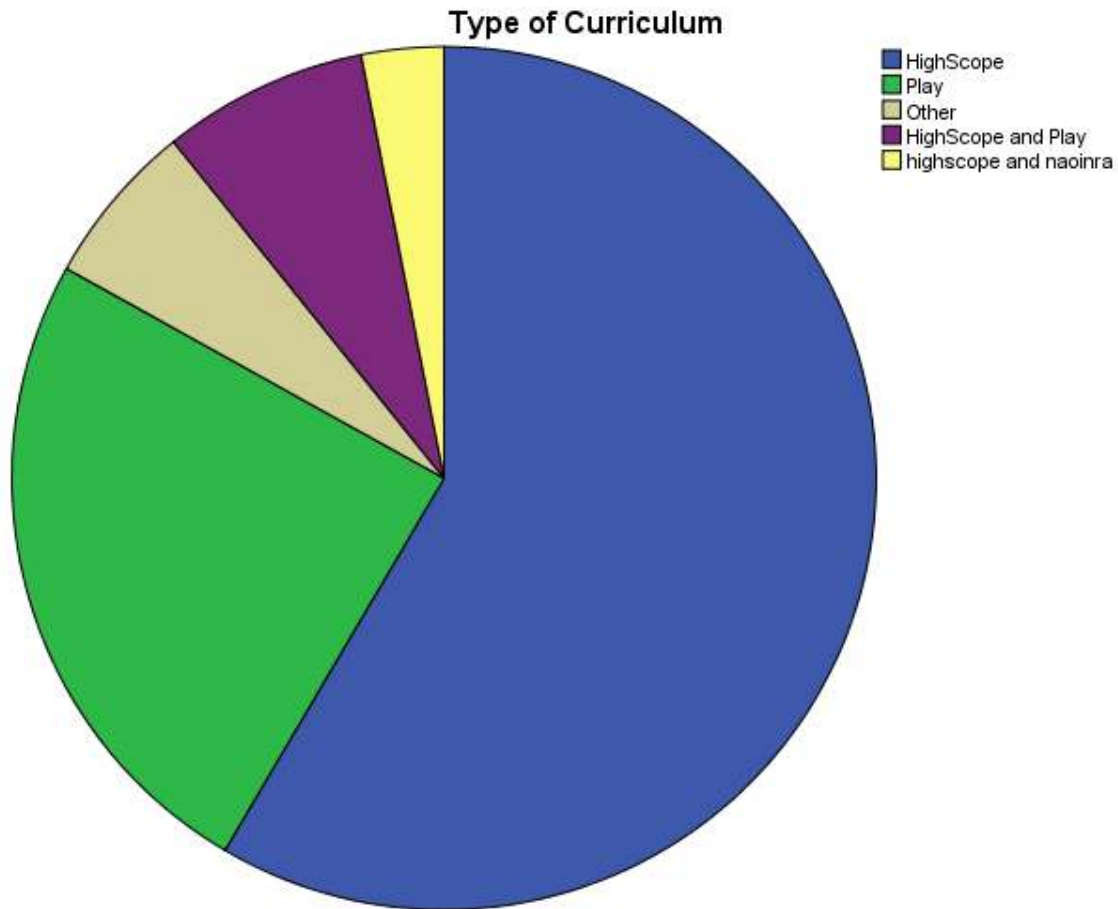


Figure 2 Type of Curriculum

Figure 2 shows information on the type of curriculum used in the early years education services. 54% of participants use the HighScope curriculum, 23% use Play as the curriculum, 7% use Play and HighScope, 3% use HighScope and Naoínra and 6% use other curriculum not stated. Participants using the HighScope and Play approach have the highest job satisfaction ($M=158.20$, $SD=18.59$), while participants using the HighScope and Naoínra approach have the highest perceived stress ($M=28.00$, $SD=11.31$) and work-life conflict ($M=18.00$, $S=16.97$), see Table 4 of the appendix.

Table 5 displays statistical information on staff qualifications and job satisfaction, perceived stress and work life conflict.

Table 5

Staff Qualifications

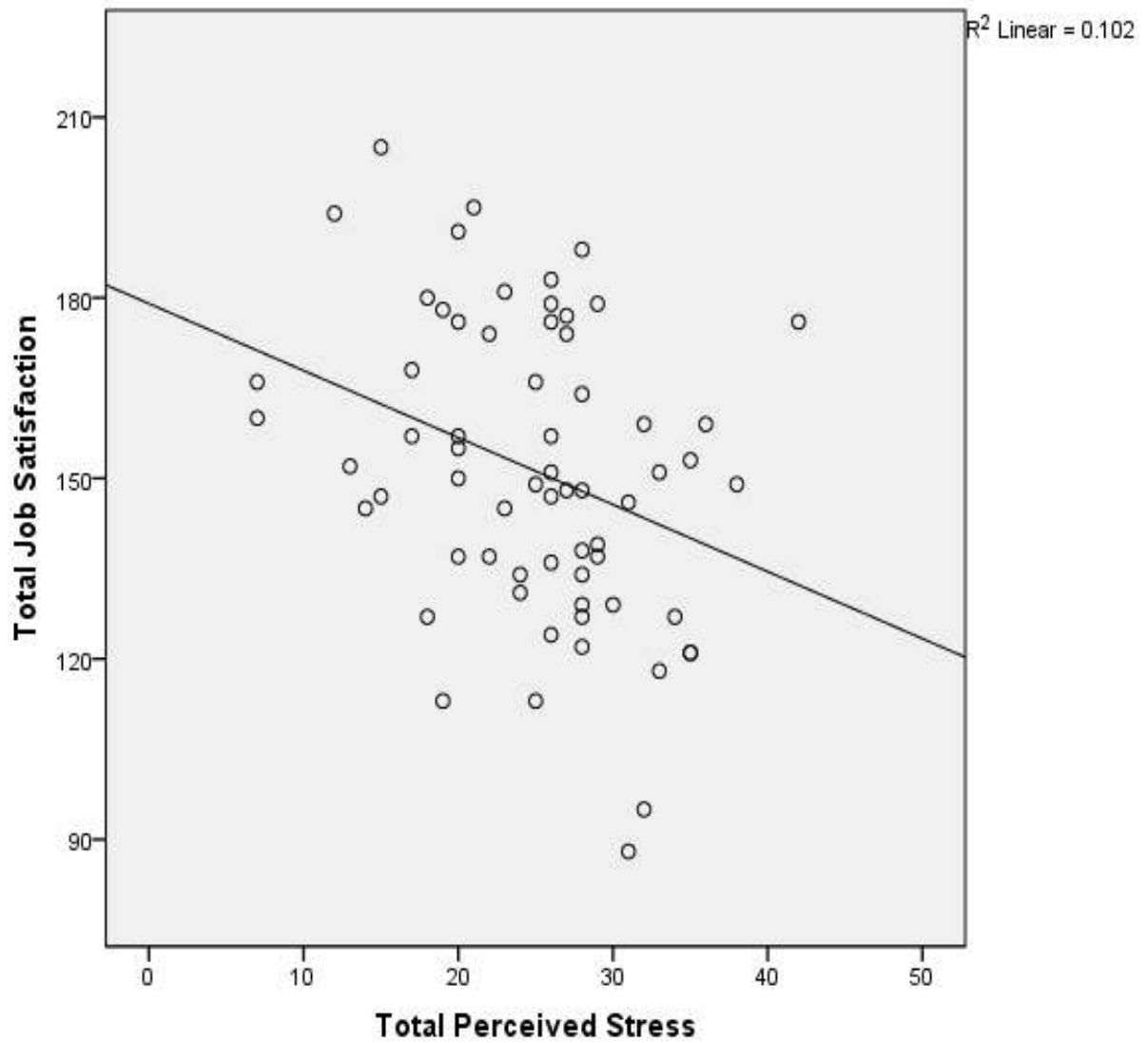
Qualifications	N	%	JS	PS	WLC
FETAC 5	35	50	153.20	24.19	7.64
FETAC 6	23	33	145.35	25.77	12.86
Level 7	1	1	137.00	22.00	-9
Level 8	3	4	147.33	24.00	14.67
FETAC 5 in training	5	7	168.60	30.25	12.40
Other	1	1	150.00	20.00	6.00
Missing -9	2				

In regard to Table 5, the participants in training, doing FETAC level 5 are most satisfied with their job and have the highest perceived stress. Participants with a Level 7 qualification are least satisfied with their job however since there is only one person with a Level 7 and only makes up 1% of the survey on this topic, this cannot be taken as a true reflection.

Participants with a Level 8 qualification are high in work-life conflict. Participants with other qualifications not specified have the lowest perceived stress and work-life conflict. In regard to specialised training see Table 6 in the appendix, participants with other specialised training not specified are most satisfied with their job, have the highest perceived stress and lowest work-life conflict.

Table 7 in the appendix displays statistical information on marital status and job satisfaction, perceived stress and work-life conflict. In regards to participants who are cohabiting, this group have higher job satisfaction over participants in other groups. Participants who are

married have the highest perceived stress and work-life conflict but also have the lowest job satisfaction.



R square linear = 0.102 = 10% = weak

Figure 3 A Scattergram of job satisfaction and perceived stress

A Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between job satisfaction, perceived stress, work-life conflict and life-work conflict, among other demographic variables such as age. Table 8 displays inferential statistics for correlations between job satisfaction, perceived stress, work-life conflict and other variables.

Table 8

Inferential statistics for correlations between job satisfaction, perceived stress, work-life conflict and life-work conflict and other variables

Variable	JS	PS	WLC	LWC	Age
JS	—	.319**	-.166	—	—
PS	-.319**	—	.344*	.265*	—
WLC	-.166	.344*	—	—	.313*
LWC	—	.265*	—	—	—
Age	—	—	.313*	—	—

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level

**Significant at 0.01 level

In regard to Table 8, a Pearson's correlation coefficient showed a moderate negative significant correlation between perceived stress and job satisfaction, ($r = -.319$, $p=0.01$, 2-tailed). As expected this supports hypothesis 1, the results show that participants who have higher levels of job satisfaction ($M=152.07$, $SD=24.38$) have lower levels of perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$).

There was a moderate positive significant correlation between perceived stress and work-life conflict, ($r = .344, p=0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$). This supports hypothesis 2. It indicates that participants who have higher levels of perceived stress ($M=24.95, SD=7.07$) have higher levels of work-life conflict ($M=11.93, SD=8.09$).

Hypothesis 3 was not supported; a Pearson's correlation showed there was no significant correlation between job satisfaction and work life conflict ($r= -.166, p>0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$).

Unexpectedly hypothesis 4 was partly supported as there was a moderate positive significant correlation between age of participant and work-life conflict, ($r = .313, p=0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$). This means that the older the participant the higher the levels of work-life conflict ($M=11.93, SD=8.09$).

An Independent T-test was conducted to explore differences between early years educators working full-time and perceived stress. An Independent T-test showed a non-significant difference between full-time workers and perceived stress, ($t (61) = .593, p>0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$) Therefore hypothesis 5 was not supported.

An ANOVA was used to explore differences between level of qualifications and job satisfaction. An ANOVA showed no significant difference between level of qualifications and job satisfaction, ($F (5, 62) =.921, p>0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$). Therefore hypothesis 6 was not supported.

A Regression was used to test whether perceived stress work-life balance and life-work were predictors of job satisfaction, see Table 9 in the appendix. The results of the regression indicated that perceived stress predicted job satisfaction ($F(1,63) = 7.13, p = 0.01$). It was found that perceived stress significantly predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = -.32, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI} = -1.947 - -.262$).

A Regression analyses was used to examine if certain variables predicted work-life conflict, see Table 10 in the appendix. The results indicated that perceived stress positively predicted work-life conflict, ($F(1, 53) = 7.12, p = 0.01$). Perceived stress significantly predicted work-life conflict, ($\beta = .34, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI} = .102 - .723$).

A Regression analyses was used to examine if certain variables predicted life-work conflict, see Table 11 in the appendix. The results indicated that perceived stress predicted life-work conflict, ($F(1, 61) = 4.62, p = 0.04$). It was found that perceived stress significantly predicted life-work conflict ($\beta = .265, p = .036, 95\% \text{ CI} = .018 - .508$).

Additional results show that there was a weak positive significant correlation between perceived stress and life-work conflict, ($r = .265, p = 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$). The results show that participants who have higher levels of perceived stress ($M = 24.95, SD = 7.07$) have higher levels of life-work conflict ($M = 10.22, SD = 6.88$).

In regard to Table 12 in the appendix, a Pearson's correlation showed there was a weak negative significant correlation between supervision and life-work conflict, ($r = -.253, p = 0.05, 2\text{-tailed}$). This means that participants who have low satisfaction levels of supervision ($M = 20.66, SD = 3.69$) have higher levels of life-work conflict ($M = 10.22, SD = 6.88$).

A Pearson's correlation showed there was significant correlations between perceived stress and a number of job satisfaction subscales; A Pearson's correlation showed there was a weak significant relationship between promotion and perceived stress, ($r = -.303, p = 0.05, 2\text{-$

tailed). This shows that early years educators who have lower opportunities for promotion ($M=12.63$, $SD=4.16$) have higher levels of perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$).

A Pearson's correlation showed there was a negative significant correlation between rewards and perceived stress, ($r = -.261$, $p=0.05$, 2-tailed). This shows that early years educators low in satisfaction with rewards ($M=16.86$, $SD=4.73$) are high in perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$).

A Pearson's correlation showed there was a negative significant correlation between working conditions and perceived stress, ($r=-.250$, $p=0.05$, 2-tailed). This shows that early years educators low in satisfaction with working conditions ($M=15.61$, $SD=3.46$) are high in perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$).

A Pearson's correlation showed there was a negative significant correlation between co-workers and perceived stress, ($r=-.323$, $p=0.01$, 2-tailed). This means that early years educators low in satisfaction with co-workers ($M=19.49$, $SD=3.87$) are high in perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$).

Discussion

A Pearson's correlation test was employed to explore relationships between job satisfaction, perceived stress, work-life conflict and life-work conflict among other demographic variables such as age. An Independent T-test was used to explore differences between full-time and part-time workers and perceived stress. An ANOVA was conducted to investigate differences between and job satisfaction and staff qualifications. A Regression analyses was conducted to indicate predictor variables of job satisfaction, perceived stress, work-life conflict and life-work conflict. The study used three self-report psychometric measures, the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS, Cohen et al., 1983), the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS, Spector, 1985) and the Work-Life Life-Work Conflict Scale (Netemeyer et al., 1996). A questionnaire devised by the researcher was also included.

The first hypothesis predicted that early years educators with higher perceived stress would have lower job satisfaction. The results showed a moderate negative significant correlation between perceived stress and job satisfaction, ($r = -.319$, $p=0.01$, 2-tailed). Therefore as there is a significant negative relationship between perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$) and job satisfaction ($M=152.07$, $SD=24.38$), the null hypothesis can be rejected. The findings of this study supports Ayman, Fouad, Murad, Nabeel and Nazih, (2005) findings in a study on perceived stress and job satisfaction among nurses, where nurses high in perceived stress are low in job satisfaction.

Mean values on JSS, overall showed that early years educators have a moderate to high level of job satisfaction, and on subscales 87% are highly satisfied with nature of work and 83% are highly satisfied with their supervisor. This supports Tsigilis et al, (2006) in a study with Greek early years educators with job satisfaction and burn out who were most satisfied with nature of work and immediate supervisor. As early years education is such a specific area; working with children, it is hoped that nature of work would be high in job

satisfaction considering the level of commitment needed to work with children as supported by Kilgallon, et al, (2008) who found educational setting and attitudes, beliefs and pedagogical practice contributed to early years educators sustainment.

The second hypothesis predicted that early years educators with higher perceived stress would have higher work-life conflict. The results showed a moderate positive significant correlation between perceived stress and work-life conflict, ($r = .344, p=0.05, 2$ -tailed). Therefore as there is significant positive relationship between perceived stress ($M=24.95, SD=7.07$) and work-life conflict ($M=11.93, SD=8.09$), the null hypothesis can be rejected. These results support Dr. Tejinder Billing's, assistant professor of management in the Rohrer College of Business research who has studied the correlation between stress, time and work-family conflict in three different countries: the U.S., her native India and Venezuela. Results show that individuals have a threshold level for workload, beyond which work is perceived as overload. When an individual's workload exceeds the optimal level that he or she is comfortable with on a daily basis in the work situation, then psychological strain is the likely outcome, all participants feel stress when they perceive themselves as having too much work and too little time in which to get it done. (Chavis, 2010)

The third hypothesis predicted that early years educators with higher job satisfaction would have lower work-life conflict. A Pearson's correlation showed no significant relationship between job satisfaction and work-life conflict ($r = -.166, p>0.05, 2$ -tailed). Therefore the null hypothesis must be accepted. This does not support research which found there was a relationship between satisfaction with working conditions and with work-life balance in a study by Cabrita and Perista, (2006).

The fourth hypothesis predicted that the youngest and oldest participants would have higher job satisfaction. A Pearson's correlation showed a moderate positive significant correlation between age of participant and work-life conflict, ($r = .313, p=0.05, 2$ -tailed).

Therefore as there is a significant positive relationship between age and job satisfaction the null hypothesis must be accepted. This result does not fully support Clark's et al, (1996) research on age and job satisfaction being U-shaped, meaning the youngest and oldest participants have high job satisfaction. It supports the research in one way and that is that the older the early years educator the higher the job satisfaction but not with the younger early years educators having higher job satisfaction. An explanation for this could be that younger participants have in fact got high expectations starting out in early years education wanting to strive for quality as opposed to Clark et al. (1996) suggesting younger workers have lower expectations starting out. Even though the hypothesis has not been supported in terms of significance, it should be noted that the staff who are in training in FETAC level 5 have the highest mean score of job satisfaction ($M=168.60$, $SD=30.25$) suggesting that regardless of age participants starting out in early years education have high job satisfaction.

The fifth hypothesis predicted that early years educators working full-time would have higher perceived stress. An Independent T-test showed a non-significant difference between those who work full time and higher perceived stress ($t(61) = .593$, $p>0.05$, 2-tailed). For this current research then of early years educators it shows that the number of hours worked is not associated with perceived stress and therefore the null hypothesis must be accepted. This does not support Williams (2003) research suggesting that full-time workers cite more stress triggers than part-time workers. However this current study shows early years educators who work full time have higher, though not significantly, higher mean scores of perceived stress ($M=25.95$, $SD=6.95$) compared to those who work part time.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that early years educators with a higher qualification would have lower job satisfaction. An ANOVA showed a non-significant difference between and job satisfaction and staff qualifications ($F(5, 62) = .921$, $p>0.05$, 2-tailed). Therefore the null hypothesis must be accepted. This does not support Bender & Heywood (2004) research

that higher education results in lower job satisfaction. However given the fact that there were so few participants in the level 7 and level 8 qualification group, this finding should be interpreted with caution.

Additional results showed a number of significant findings; results showed there was a weak negative significant correlation between supervision and life-work conflict, ($r = -.253$, $p=0.05$, 2-tailed). Participants who have low satisfaction levels with supervision ($M=20.66$, $SD=3.69$) have higher levels of life-work conflict ($M=10.22$, $SD=6.88$) and this result supports Leaptrott & McDonald, (n.d.) who suggests an increase in interactions with empathetic and supportive persons of varying hierarchical rank at the workplace may serve to reduce stress experienced in the family role, therefore adequate support from a higher level of management, depending on the structure of the organisation can only promote a healthy workforce of early years educators. There were significant negative correlations between perceived stress ($M=24.95$, $SD=7.07$) and a number of job satisfaction subscales; these were promotion ($M=12.63$, $SD=4.16$) and perceived stress, ($r = -.303$, $p=0.05$, 2-tailed), rewards ($M=16.86$, $SD=4.73$) and perceived stress, ($r = -.261$, $p=0.05$, 2-tailed), working conditions ($M=15.61$, $SD=3.46$) and perceived stress, ($r=-.250$, $p=0.05$, 2-tailed) and co-workers ($M=19.49$, $SD=3.87$) and perceived stress, ($r=-.323$, $p=0.01$, 2-tailed). These results support Taylor (2007) in that lack of social support is a stressor. Support and good relationships with a supervisor and co-workers can therefore have positive benefits for the worker. It is also vital that working conditions are at the highest level possible. Perceived stress is a predictor of job satisfaction this supports Cooper and Kelly (1993), work-life conflict and life-work conflict therefore a reduction in stress levels can only aid a work-life balance and increase job satisfaction. The researcher explored relationships between the December and January collections and job satisfaction and perceived stress, no significant difference was found between time of year and job satisfaction or perceived stress.

This study aimed to explore relationships between perceived stress, job satisfaction, work-life conflict and life-work conflict. Perceived stress was negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with work-life conflict and life-work conflict. Perceived stress also predicted job satisfaction, work-life conflict and life-work conflict. Stress in the workplace of early years education can never be completely diminished however having policies and procedures in place for staff around stress management and self-care can promote a feeling of being valued and that alone could reduce stress in addition to having healthy and satisfied employees (Ramsey and Stover Kjeldsen, 2005), which can only be of benefit to the children in the early years education service.

Based on the results of this study, measures to support staff working with children should be looked at. Since a number of early years education services are using governmental schemes, the government and policy makers along with employers should commit to developing and implementing interventions to lower perceived stress and higher job satisfaction and encourage a healthy work-life balance. As mentioned in the literature review in order to increase job satisfaction, Messmer (2005) as cited in Matthewman, Rose & Hetherington, (2009) proposes the employer to take note of the opportunity for intellectual challenge and training regardless of it relating to the specific job, training in stress management and other self-care practices could aid an increase in job satisfaction but also could reduce stress as according to Shapiro, Astin, Bishop and Cordova, (2005) an 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), intervention may be effective for reducing stress and increasing quality of life and self-compassion in health care professionals. As early years education is a combination of education and caring profession it is possible that implementing these programmes in early years education profession could have similar effects. Mill and Romano-White, (1999) found training did become very important to the

quality of the interactions the educators had with the children. Messmer (2005) also suggests employers to offer a work-life balanced approach and to provide on-going feedback to the individual on their performance, (Matthewman, Rose & Hetherington, 2009) this could be done through regular supervision either internally or externally and a work-life balanced approach can be achieved by flexible work options, and family or personal leave. (Estes & Michael, 2005) This would then reinforce the value of recognition of staff worth at work and improve the employee's overall level of well-being and satisfaction.

A limitation of this study was the limited literature in the early years education sector, this left difficulties in comparing studies. Research used was then a mix between early years education and health care workers. How the questionnaires were distributed was another, from feedback from participants; participants explained to the researcher that they were concerned with their supervisor or employer seeing their scores. Before the researcher amended the job satisfaction scores (due to missing scores), overall scores for total job satisfaction could not be totalled as 26 participants did not answer fully. It is possible that participants may have felt uncomfortable answering some questions. Self-report bias is likely in organisational behaviour as employees often believe there is a possibility that their employer could gain access to their responses. (Donaldson & Grant-Vallance, 2002) For future studies of this type, an online questionnaire may be best.

In regard to gender, of 70 participants only 2 were male. This is due to the high number of females in the early years profession and so this made it difficult to explore any gender differences.

It was hoped that participants from both private and community based services would fill out the questionnaires and a comparison across the two could have been conducted however only a small number of private early years education services participated.

As stress is linked to illness, future studies on sickness/absenteeism, sick leave and stress among early years educators could be interesting and beneficial to employers.

Research in the area of sources of stress and specific job type for early years educators in Ireland specifically would be relevant as there are so few studies in the area, most are centred around the children and do not include staff. As pay was reported as being an item low in job satisfaction, it would be interesting to explore further why early years educators remain working in employment with low pay. With this in mind personality type and job/role selection among early years educators could be explored.

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Appendix

Item A: Cover letter for questionnaire used

Dear Respondent,

I am currently studying in my final year of a BA in Psychology in Dublin Business School, as part of my course I am undertaking a research project.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could answer the following questionnaire, which should take a maximum of 10 minutes. The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived stress and job satisfaction among Early Years Educators.

There are four sections to the questionnaire. In each section there will be a short explanation of what is required of you in filling out the questionnaire.

There is no right or wrong answer and complete anonymity is guaranteed. Your questionnaire will be merged with those from other people and answers given will not be able to be traced back to you. Neither your name nor any identifying details are required from you. You have the right to withdraw at any stage during the completion of this questionnaire.

If you have any queries or questions please do not hesitate to contact me by email

████████████████████

or you can contact my supervisor in DBS by emailing her at

████████████████████

Thank you very much for your time,

Simone Jones

Item B: Demographic details used in questionnaire

Please tick the most appropriate box. Where 'other' is ticked please specify in the space provided.

Age: _____ years

Gender: Male Female

Work Status: Part-time Full-time

Is your service...? Private community run

What type of service is it? Full Day Care

Children aged 3mths-5yrs

Children aged 1-5yrs

Other _____

Part Day Care

Pre-school sessional

Morning only session

Morning and afternoon session

Other _____

What curriculum is used? Montessori Play

High Scope Other _____

What is the ratio of adult to children in your service? _____

Number of children enrolled in the service? _____

Number of Early Years Educators in the service? _____

What level of qualification do you hold in Childcare?

FETAC level 5 FETAC level 6 level 7 level 8 Other _____

What further specialised training do you have? Elklan special needs

Hanen Challenging behaviour

Other _____

How many years' experience do you have working with children in an early years setting? (If less than 1year give months)_____

Item C: Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al, 1983)

The questions in this section ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer each question fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0 = never

1 = almost never

2 = sometimes

3 = fairly often

4 = very often

Never ← _____ → Very Often

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2 | In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 | In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4 | In the last month, how often have you successfully dealt with irritating life hassles? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 | In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7 | In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8 | In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9 | In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10 | In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11 | In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13 | In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14 | In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Item D: Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985)

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION THAT COMES CLOSEST TO REFLECTING YOUR OPINION ABOUT IT.

1= Disagree strongly

2= Disagree moderately

3=Disagree slightly

4=Agree slightly

5=Agree moderately

6=Agree strongly

		Disagree strongly ← ____ → Agree strongly
1	I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2	There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3	My supervisor is quite competent in doing his/her job.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4	I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5	When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6	Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7	I like the people I work with.	1 2 3 4 5 6
8	I sometimes feel my job is meaningless.	1 2 3 4 5 6
9	Communications seem good within this organisation.	1 2 3 4 5 6
10	Raises are too few and far between.	1 2 3 4 5 6
11	Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted.	1 2 3 4 5 6
12	My supervisor is unfair to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6
13	The benefits we receive are as good as most other Early Years organisations offer.	1 2 3 4 5 6
14	I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated.	1 2 3 4 5 6
15	My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape.	1 2 3 4 5 6
16	I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of	1 2 3 4 5 6

	people I work with.						
17	I like doing the things I do at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	The goals of this organisation are not clear to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I feel unappreciated by the organisation when I think about what they pay me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	People get ahead as fast here as they do in other places.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of workers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	The benefit package we have is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	There are few rewards for those who work here.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I have too much to do at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I enjoy my co-workers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	There are benefits we do not have which we should have.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	I like my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	I have too much paperwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	I am satisfied with my chances for promotion.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	There is too much bickering and fighting at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	My job is enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	Work assignments are not fully explained.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Item E: Demographic details relating to family

The following section will ask you to indicate about your family life and how this interacts with your job.

Family Status: Are you Married Single
 Cohabiting Divorced Other _____
 Do you have children? Yes No
 If yes, how many? _____
 What are their ages? _____

Item F: Work-life life-work conflict scale (Netemeyer, et al, 1996)

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION THAT COMES CLOSEST TO REFLECTING YOUR OPINION ABOUT IT.

1= Strongly disagree

2= Moderately disagree

3=Slightly disagree

4=Undecided

5= Slightly agree

6= Moderately agree

7= Strongly agree

Strongly disagree ← _____ → Strongly agree

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------|
| 1 | The demands of my work interfere with my life away from work | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 2 | The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil other interests | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 3 | Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands of my job | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 4 | My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfil other responsibilities and duties | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 5 | Due to work, I have to make changes to my plans for activities away from work | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 6 | The demands of my personal life interfere with work related duties | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 7 | I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time outside work | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 8 | Things I want to do at work don't get done because of the demands of my interests outside work | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

9	My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Personal life strains interfere with my abilities to perform work related duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Table 2

*Type of Work***Group Statistics**

	Type of Work	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Perceived Stress	Full Time	22	25.95	6.95	1.48
	Part Time	41	24.85	7.05	1.10
Total Job Satisfaction	Full Time	26	153.12	22.80	4.47
	Part Time	42	150.93	25.71	3.97
Work-Life Conflict	Full Time	24	13.46	8.49	1.73
	Part Time	35	11.09	7.81	1.32
Life-Work Conflict	Full Time	26	9.46	5.11	1.00
	Part Time	40	10.93	7.92	1.25

Table 4

Type of Curriculum

Curriculum	N	%	JS	SD	PS	SD	WLC	SD
HighScope	38	54.3	152.97	25.29	24.82	7.31	12.71	7.66
Play	16	22.9	153.69	17.60	24.06	8.41	10.69	9.01
HS & Play	5	7.1	158.20	18.59	25.80	1.09	7.00	3.78
HS & Naíonra	2	2.9	157.00	2.82	28.00	11.31	18.00	4.00
Other	4	5.7	114.25	26.42	26.25	6.13	7.67	16.91
Missing	5							

Table 6
Descriptive statistics for specialised training

Special Training	N	%	JS	PS	WLC
Elklan	4	5.7	149.00	24.75	14.75
Special needs	19	27.1	151.32	25.89	11.76
Challenging behaviour	12	17.1	142.75	26.80	14.08
Hanen	14	20.0	142.71	26.86	15.67
Other	3	4.3	167.00	28.00	6.67

Table 7

Marital status and job satisfaction, perceived stress and work-life conflict

Marital status	N	%	JS	PS	WLC
Married	22	31.4	140.50	25.95	14.83
Single	24	34.3	156.17	23.36	10.86
Cohabiting	19	27.1	161.05	25.82	10.78
Divorced	3	4.3	156.67	22.67	11.00
Widowed	1	1.4	147.00	24.88	missing

Table 9

Regression of predictors of job satisfaction

Variable	R	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.
Perceived stress	.319	-1.11	.42	-.32	-2.67	.01

Table 10

Regression of predictors of work-life conflict

Variable	R	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.
Perceived stress	.344	.29	.11	.34	2.67	.01

Table 11

Regression of predictors of life-work conflict

Variable	R	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.
Perceived stress	.265	.26	.12	.27	2.15	.04

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Table 12

Inferential statistics for promotion, rewards, conditions and co-workers

JS Subscales	Super- vision	Promo- tion	Rewards	Condition	Co- workers	PS	LWC
Supervision	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.253*
Promotion	—	—	—	—	—	-.303*	—
Rewards	—	—	—	—	—	-.261*	-.285*
Conditions	—	—	—	—	—	-.250*	-.302*
Co-workers	—	—	—	—	—	-.323**	—
PS	—	-.303*	-.261*	-.250*	-.323**	—	—
LWC	-.253*	—	-.285*	-.302*	—	—	—

*significant at 0.05

**significant at 0.01

Table 13

Age of Participant

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation

Age of Participant	60	19	59	35.05	9.914
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