

Resilience, Social Support and Self-Esteem:
Coping Resources Required for Transition
Following Job Loss in Midlife

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Declaration

“I declare that this thesis that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of BA (Hons) Psychology is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledge by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.”

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ABSTRACT

To understand the importance of the variable's resilience, social support and self-esteem for individuals aged 50 to 71+ who experienced job loss through redundancy or retirement was the aim of this study. Longevity is a phenomenon of our time as well as changing work environments and roles. Participants (n 121) were recruited through snowball sampling from an on-line quantitative questionnaire. It was hypothesised that variables were different for gender and the reason for job loss, no significance was found. Correlations were identified between Self-esteem and Resilience, and Social Support. Additional analysis found participants within 50-54 age group had lower self-esteem than participants in older age groups. Socio-economic and education status influence self-esteem and should be included in future research, as well as personality traits. In conclusion, as midlife is a time of psychosocial development, individuals who experience job loss should receive psychological support as part of their exit planning process.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Take away from any of us our identity or sense of person, make our purposes in life seem futile or unobtainable, disrupt our relationship and the predictable patterns and rhythms of our life and we collapse. To destroy the three P’s is to turn human beings into victims, powerless and vulnerable.” (Handy, 1985, p.165)

Mid-life is a time of change for individuals and for those who are working they may be experiencing many changes in their workplaces. Individuals who have experienced job-loss in mid-life as a result of redundancy or retirement, have other challenges to navigate. Resilience, social support and self-esteem are coping strategies which were researched through a quantitative on-line survey for this study. Longevity, role of employment, impact of unemployment, technology and future of work are factors which this study will discuss.

1.1 Job Loss and Longevity

Job loss in mid-life may be as a result of redundancy or retirement. Redundancy in mid-life may be seen as *‘taking early retirement’* but does the word retirement have the same meaning as it had a number of years ago. The concept of retirement was introduced by Otto Von Bismarck in 1883, highlighting that a pension would be paid to people over 65 years following forced retirement (Weisman, 1999). In 1908 a non-contributory pension was introduced in Ireland for people aged 70 and over. Life expectancy at that time was around 54 years, therefore the majority of people did not live long enough to receive the pension. Longevity is a phenomenon of today as people are living longer. Since 1950 life expectancy has doubled, the current statistics state that for men it is 74.8 years of age and for women it is 82.4 years of age (“Home—CSO - Central Statistics Office,” n.d.). The pension age has been increasing over the years and the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 increased it to 68 years if born after 31st December 1961 (“Retired and older people,” n.d.) www.welfare.ie. Latest research has found that the least deprived areas in the country have an extra seven years life expectancy than the most deprived.(Teljeur, Darker, Barry, & O’Dowd, 2016). Does

employment or unemployment play a role in life expectancy. Higher unemployment rates are evident in lower socio-economic areas, poor standards of education and unemployment are linked. Findings from the 2016 census data highlight that lower unemployment levels are evident when higher levels of education are reached. Waters and Moore (2002) found that unemployed individuals had lower levels of self-esteem than employed individuals. Self-esteem is one of the coping strategies for job loss researched in this study,

1.2 The Changing Workplace

Over the decades different factors have resulted in job loss as a result of redundancy. During recessions greater economic loss is associated with job loss. In the 1980's recession, the rise in new modern plants and the introduction of the shift worker, resulted in a large number of workers being laid off work. The early 1990's recession resulted in the introduction of flat organisation structures and the removal of middle management, which was an effort to maintain efficiencies of the organisation and protect shareholder value. Downsizing, mergers takeovers in the 2000's resulted in unemployment for some workers and opportunities for others. Between the years 2007- 2009, this recession marked a significant increase in levels of unemployment globally. Lower levels of unemployment or displacement were evident in the more educated worker (Brand, 2015). A common feature of the US job market is displacement as employment stability has declined (Hollister, 2011). Individuals need on-going training and development to maintain relevance in the changing workplace. With the rise of new technologies, the nature of work and the types of roles available are changing rapidly, which means companies need to invest in their staff through retraining and upskilling, or job loss through redundancy is a phenomenon that is likely to continue. The 'baby boomers' make up 23.4% of the Eurozone working population versus millennials which account for 20% , there is an opportunity to re-think and examine changes differently (*The EU's Reliance on Older Workers*, n.d.). For some organisations it is not unusual to have a mix of employees varying

in age by 25 years (Wegge, Roth, Neubach & Schmidt, 2008). Or is redundancy the strategy used by organisation to manage the changing landscape of work versus developing an intergenerational workforce.

Lifelong learning is an important concept for action by individuals seeking to stay in employment and people seeking to re-enter the workplace. Openness to learning and problem solving are necessary to manage occupational transition (Hallqvist & Hyden 2012). A lot of research has focussed on economic outcomes following job loss, it is important to examine the wider impact of unemployment (Brand, 2015). What are the potential psychological outcomes, what personal attributes are necessary for individual to acquire and develop to cope with job loss, what coping strategies are required? This study looks at the effect of resilience, social support and self-esteem as coping strategies of individuals to deal with the change and transition of job loss in mid-life.

1.3 Transition in mid-life

The emotional response to sudden job loss can be similar to early stages of grief (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Job loss in mid-life is a major transition for individuals and this transition is a very complex process. The individual is no longer required to go to work, this is the change that has taken place, which is an external factor. The internal process of the job loss is the transition an individual goes through to understand and cope with their new circumstances, their new life. Bridges (1991) created the Transition Model which identified three stages in the transition process. Stage One, acknowledges that something is ending and requires an individual to let go of the old job or ways of doing something. In this stage there is a sense of loss. Stage Two, is known as the neutral zone, this is the time when an individuals may experience both negative emotions, such as frustration, uncertainty, impatience, resistance to their current state or experience positive emotions such as happiness, a sense of freedom and

opportunity. This stage may feel like an emotional rollercoaster. Stage Three, is when a new beginning is starting to emerge, and the individual will be more motivated to move into something new or will be open to explore and embrace their new stage of life. França (2009) highlighted that to achieve wellbeing in retirement, within the retirement planning process, openness to the prospect of a new beginning is important.

Redundancy, either voluntary or forced can be challenging on individuals. Vickers and Parris (2007) research found redundancy to be an alienating experience, with individuals experiencing feelings of shame, betrayal, powerlessness and social isolation. Their study also found the individuals who had experienced redundancy, did not bounce back to who they were before redundancy. It had an impact on their lives and they were changed. The changes affected their purpose, personal identity and relationships, individuals had changed as a result of redundancy, they did not just bounce back, to their 'former self', their sense of purpose was challenged. Events where a drop of personal status is perceived may trigger feelings of shame (Velotti, Garofalo, Bottazzi & Caretti 2017). For some individuals job loss may be perceived as a drop in personal status. Elison, Gaarofalo, & Velootti, (2014) proposed that fluctuation in self-esteem may be linked to experiences of shame This study aims to examine if there are any correlations between resilience, self-esteem and social support following job loss through redundancy or retirement in mid-life which could link to feelings of shame and social isolation as found in Vickers & Parris (2007) study.

1.4 Purpose of Employment

Crowley, Hayslip, and Hobdy (2003) research looked at psychological hardiness and adjustment to life events such as job loss and a youngest child leaving home. Findings identified job loss was a more stressful experience. In mid-life these events may happen concurrently, children leaving home is a natural phase in life, however, job loss may impact on

an individual's sense of identity, sense of self and purpose. Erickson & Erickson (1997) identified mid-life (45-65) as a phase of generativity or stagnation. Job loss may equate to loss of generativity and then to stagnation, or an individual may have been stagnating in their job, and the new chapter in their lives may lead to a time of generativity.

Work provides financial rewards at a basic level, but also meaning and purpose. Maintaining that sense of meaning and purpose is important following job loss in mid-life, it is important to explore what that could look like for an individual at this stage in life, as it is possibly different to earlier years. In mid-life a person's basic needs are generally satisfied, the questions may be *what else is there? is there more for me and in me?* The questions at this stage may be around legacy. Following job loss in mid-life one's identity, self-concept and self-esteem may be questioned.

1.5 What does employment provide that unemployment challenges?

Brand (2015) highlights that a job is a fundamental social role and provides a source of social relations as well as identity and self-concept. Research by (Hiswåls, Marttila, Mälstam, & Macassa, 2017) identified that work provides a sense of belonging and loss of work affects social life as well of feelings of hopelessness, isolation, loss of self-esteem, as well as surrendering a role which they value. Individuals who are very involved with their job are less likely to retire (Adams, Prescher, & Beehr, 2002). Research supports this idea as retirement means giving up work, leaving formal work. The premise of research by Hanisch and Hulin (1990) is that retirement would have a negative effect on individuals. This current study is looking at the effect of job loss in mid-life on an individual coping resources, which should show an issue for retired participants if this still holds true today, thirty years since research by Hanisch and Hulin (1990). Nalin & França (2015) found that determined resilience had an impact on wellbeing in retirement. Does redundancy and retirement challenge resilience? The

Brief Resilience Scale (BSR) was used to capture levels of resilience in this survey (Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher & Bernard, 2008).

1.6 Resilience

When under strain the ability to remain adaptive and re-orientate to the new situation is the essence of resilience in relation to human behaviour. Characteristics of resilience include self-belief, elasticity, meaning, solution finding, support, proactivity, emotional control and realistic positivity (Pemberton, 2015).

Erickson and Erickson (1997) highlight psychosocial stages of development and aging may have a positive or negative impact on an individual. Research by (McGinnis, 2018) highlighted that resilience in mid-life is different to resilience in younger adults. Following a review of various papers on what resilience is, growth and strengthening from adversity (Bonanno, 2004), stress coping ability (Connor & Davidson, 2003) and (Werner, 1995) sustained competence under stress, (Ryan & Caltabiano, 2009) devised a resilience in mid-life scale which suggests that resilience is a strength that is modifiable. Resilience is learned from previous adversity experienced by an individual; it is like a muscle that can be built up over time. Individuals who experience previous redundancies may have higher levels of resilience than those who have not experienced job loss. As there is very little evidence available to support this idea, this is an area for further research. This study will examine if resilience is an issue or if there is evidence of resilience in mid-life following job loss.

Redundancies or early retirement are a feature of downsizing, the culture, leadership and trust within a company has a major effect on companies downsizing strategies (Applebaum, Close & Klasa 1999). Organisations under change should pay attention to employee emotions and characteristics, and deal with difficulties and extreme anxiety through positive thinking and building resilience (Ramlall, 2009).

Individuals who experience job loss through redundancy or retirement and have high levels of resilience in dealing with their new situation may see opportunity rather than difficulty. Having a positive mindset and seeing the opportunities will enable individuals to cope and have better outcomes in redundancy or retirement. Individuals who demonstrate resilience possess a strong belief that life is meaningful, accept their reality and have the ability to improvise (Coutu, 2002). Individuals who use negative strategies such as avoidance or withdrawal to cope with their circumstances demonstrate low levels of resilience. Individuals who do not have social support and lack the emotional benefits that this type of support brings use avoidance or withdrawal also to cope with their situation of job loss (Solve, Fisher & Kraiger, 2015). Social support may be the area to turn the negative affect to positive affect of individual dealing with redundancy or retirement. In this survey social support was measured using the Berlin Social Support Scales (BSSS), (Schwarzer & Schultz, 2000)

1.7 Social Support

Social supports and networks are external coping resources, effort and attention is required to build and maintain these networks. Employment provides a social network of colleagues and friends.

While retirement maybe planned, redundancy is generally not planned, even if it is voluntary. Loss of social networks from employment may happen immediately for some and may be a process for others. Individual who have experienced job loss, talk of the '*silence of the phone*', or '*when the phone stops ringing*'. Job loss can put a strain on personal and family relationships (Price, Friedland, & Vinokur, n.d.). Family members of unemployed individuals are affected also (Dew, Penkower & Bromet 1991). However, lower levels of stress symptoms were identified among older professionals who had experienced job loss but had shared interests and values within their relationships (Mallinckrodt & Fretz, 1988).

Social support is a factor which is important in a job search, self-confidence may be affected if families are non-supportive (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & van Ryn, 1989). Social support has a positive influence on psychological factors for the unemployed (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). As human connection with other humans is necessary for health and wellbeing, employment provides this connection without any great effort. Workers are brought together through the work naturally. Loss of this connection requires commitment and effort to build and replace. Therefore, it is important to have social connections outside of work, a separate network of contacts to work colleagues.

Individuals with higher levels of coping resources such as social support and self-esteem as well as financial resources will have the competencies to deal and cope with job loss (Solve et al., 2015). Reduction in social networks and health issues may lead to lower self-esteem in older individuals (Orth, Maes, & Schmitt, 2015). Self-esteem is an internal coping resource that is examined in this study, using the Rosenberg (1979) self-esteem scale.

1.8 Self Esteem

Rosenberg (1979) defined self-esteem as a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. Self-esteem and social relationships are linked, factors which lead to job loss, may affect relations with family, friends or colleagues which may lead to lower self-esteem, depressive symptoms or anxiety as cited in research by Brand (2015). Much research has repeatedly found that lower levels of self-esteem has been identified in unemployed individuals versus employed as cited by Waters and Moore (2002). However, an important factor is the timing and age of when an individual experiences job loss. Many longitudinal studies have reported that around mid-life self-esteem peaks (Orth, Erol, & Luciano 2018). Another factor worth mentioning here is the status or level of achievement received by an individual when they leave employment. It is not just economic factors that are disrupted by

job loss, status as well as structure of relations are impacted (Brand, 2015). Self-esteem is positively related to a worker's understanding of identity (Reitzes & Mutran, 2006).

Employment gives a sense of identity and competency and are linked to valued roles of provider for family, which links back to an individual sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Hence the interest in this study in the link between social support and self-esteem following job loss through retirement or redundancy. The impact of job loss on self-esteem in mid-life may not be an issue, as many researchers have found that older adults have the highest self-esteem as cited by Collins and Smyer (2005). This study is also exploring the impact of gender on self-esteem, social support and resilience following job loss in mid-life.

1.9 Gender

There is limited research available concerning gender differences and unemployment. Shamir (1985) found women experienced lower anxiety and depressive effects than men following job loss. However, this study was conducted in Israel in 1985, where it was identified at the time that women have lower commitment to employment and more likely to have family roles versus employment and are less financially impacted by unemployment. As women play a major role in the workforce today, some of the findings from this research does not reflect women's role in the workplace today. Ferrie, Shipley, Marmot, Stansfeld, & Smith (1995) research of public servants with the average age of forty-five, identified that job insecurity was less distressing for women than men. However, if a woman is single or the sole wage earner in the family job insecurity is as distressing for women as for men (Warr, 1984). Workers who are over 50 years of age are better prepared for job loss as they have been preparing or thinking about retirement (Witte, 1999).

Malen and Stroh, (1998) found that men have a wider network of contacts to help in a job search for managerial roles versus women. Women have always played a role in the

workforce, but not necessarily at the higher levels in organisations or institutions. It is only since 1973 that the marriage bar was lifted allowing women return to work in the civil service following marriage in Ireland. Women leaving employment or taking time out to have children has had an impact on their participation in the workforce, and the level of skills and experience they may have attained in their chosen field before taking the time out.

As a lot of the research is over twenty years old, it will be interesting to see if the findings from this study highlight women experiencing significantly different levels of resilience, self-esteem and social support than men.

1.10 Role of Mastery versus Role of Passions

In mid-life if an individual has achieved mastery and skills within their chosen field, redundancy or retirement may not affect their self-esteem, versus an individual who may not have achieved as much? Job loss in mid-life may need a different approach to job loss in earlier life. Wishing to secure a position similar to their previous position or ready to explore something new are two ways that individuals who experience job loss deal with it, these are action focussed versus emotional focussed, (Hallqvist & Hayden 2012). Action focussed is seeking reemployment based on mastery achieved, emotion focussed is exploring what could give greater fulfilment, meaning, generated from a sense of passion to achieve something versus just having the ability to achieve and do a job.

Individuals response to job loss can be varied depending on what context led to the job loss, which may be redundancy or retirement (Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995). Much research focussed on re-employment rather than other possible outcomes which may provide better outcomes for health and wellbeing (Caplan et al., 1989). Research is sparse on wellbeing during unemployment as mentioned by (Duffy, Bott, Allan, & Torrey, 2013), highlighting that future research should include self-esteem and social support. Self-esteem and social support

are factors which may affect prospects of re-employment (Guindon & Smith, 2002), which are two components of social cognitive theory identified by Bandura, (1986). These are important factors to understand for individuals who experience redundancy in mid-life, if they need to secure employment. It is important for individuals to look beyond what they have been doing, understand their knowledge, skills and abilities for employment through a different lens. If these are not understood or addressed individuals may take employment which they can do, as they have achieved mastery in the skills required, but is it right for them at this stage in their lives. Is there more within them.? Appropriate supports should be put in place for individuals in mid-life to explore and unlock their unidentified passions to date.

Depending on the duration of unemployment, over time coping resources tend to diminish (Latack et al., 1995). The duration of unemployment in mid-life (49+) may be longer than for younger adults, which may result in individuals taking a job that they do not enjoy, and may affect a person's wellbeing and future health outcomes (Johnson & Butrica, 2012).

1.11 Future of Work

Concept of longevity, increasing pension age and the changes in work environments following recessions in the 80's, 90's and 00's. The *Future of Work* is another area to consider for job loss in mid-life. In 2017, McKinsey Chairman, John Manyida highlighted the importance of the model of work and work structures ("What is the future of work?," n.d.). *Lockstep* is an idea (Gratton & Scott, 2016) discuss, which is if you know someone's age you know their stage, a number of years ago this was more evident. The concept of career, job for life are changing, importance of lifelong learning is becoming a necessity (Beck, & Beck-Gershon, 2002). Individuals entering the workforce today can expect to have multiple careers over their life.

Extension of the retirement age for employees is positive for the individual who is enjoying their job and getting fulfilment and reward. If the employee is there under duress and ‘waiting’ for the retirement age to arrive, this is not beneficial for the employee or employer. *Bridge employment*, when individuals participate in the workforce following full-time work and before leisure retirement is a concept worth considering for employers and employees (Solove et al., 2015). As HR departments are moving from a people partner to a business partner, this concept may not be up for consideration (O’Riordan, 2018). Flexibility, diversity in the workplace needs to be taken seriously by HR professionals, and at the decision-making levels to push for changes in work practises in organisations.

1.12 Rationale for research

As we are living longer, retirement age is extending, the structures of workplaces are changing rapidly and new roles are being developed, it is important to understand the impact of these developments on humans. Job loss is a factor of these developments, job loss in mid-life may be a more significant factor as new skills sets may be required. How individuals in mid-life cope with transition and change is important to maintain a functioning workforce. Vickers and Parris, (2007) highlighted that companies should orientate individuals in a more humane way to redundancy, the human experience of being made redundant. It is important for individuals to believe that their role was made redundant not the person. This requires meaningful conversations. Are the government supports in place relevant for the individual in midlife who are experiencing job loss? Is extending the retirement age a blunt instrument to manage the issue longevity is placing on state pensions?

There are many factors which affect wellbeing during unemployment, and further research needs to be done to explore a more complex understanding of the correlations of the variables and the experiences of job loss (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). The aim of this study

is to establish if gender has a role to play in the impact of job loss in mid-life on the resilience, social support and self-esteem. Is there a correlation between these variables? Does the context of job loss in mid-life, i.e. redundancy or retirement affects an individual's, self-esteem?

1.13 Hypotheses

1. Resilience, Social Support and Self-Esteem levels are significantly different for males and females following job loss in mid-life.
2. There will be a positive correlation between Resilience and Self-Esteem.
3. There will be a positive correlation between Social Support and Self-Esteem.
4. Self-Esteem levels are significantly different for those who face job loss in mid-life through redundancy versus retirement

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

A total of 121 participants were recruited which complies with Cohen Power Primer 0.5, for medium effect and medium sample size while 108 are necessary for three variables (Cohen, n.d.). Participants were aged between 50 and 71+ years of age. All were either retired or had experienced redundancy. The gender split was Males 40% (N=48) and females 60% (N=73). Half of the participants were retired from employment and half had experienced redundancy. The following age bands were identified 50-54 years 17% (N =20), 55-59 years 27% (N=33), 60-64 years 26% (N=32), 65-70 years 20% (N=24), 71+ years 10% (N=12). The following was the breakdown of how they perceived their current position; 39% retired, 10% semi-retired, 7% seeking full time work, 3% seeking part-time work, 16% working full-time, 16% working part-time and 9% identified as self-employed. 40% are in in paid work and 10% seeking work.

2.2. Design

Participants were from category A therefore no ethical approval was required. Snowballing sampling was used, friends, family and colleagues were sent the on-line survey. Firstly, to ensure the on-line link was working, it was placed on LinkedIn.com which is an online social networking platform for professionals. Following successful completion of several surveys it was released onto the WhatsApp platform, which is a messenger app for smartphones. Survey was totally anonymous. Participants were instructed to click on the link to the on-line survey which was generated on Microsoft survey forms. Participants were then brought to an introduction page, outlining the objective and purpose of the survey and highlighting that it was part of a research thesis for a BA in Psychology. It was clearly outlined that it was anonymous and that once survey was completed and submitted, informed consent was given for information to be used in the analysis of the data (see Appendix A).

2.3 Measures and Apparatus

The survey included four demographic questions which covered gender, age, reason for leaving employment and current status (see appendix B). The coping resources measured in this survey were Resilience, Social Support and Self-Esteem using the following measurements. All questionnaires were laid out in a grid format.

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (Smith et al., 2008) (see Appendix C). This scale has six items. Participants were asked to “indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements” using a five-point Likert scale anchored from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Items 1,3, and 5, are positively worded and items 2,4, and 6 are negatively worded and reversed scored. To score responses were added for all six items giving a total score ranging from 6-30. Total divided by the total number of items to give an average. This scale is reported to have a Cronbach’s alpha level of 0.91. In this study Cronbach’s alpha level was .872.

The Berlin Social Support Scales_(BSSS) (Schwarzer & Schulz, 2000) (see Appendix D). This social support measurement includes seventeen statements, which are broken down into four sections. Four questions cover perceived emotional support (PES), four questions cover perceived instrumental support (PIS), four questions cover the need for support (NS) and five questions cover support seeking (SS). Participants rate their agreement with each statement on a four-point Likert Scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). Negative statement, item number 12 is reversed scored. Scale scores are obtained either by adding up item responses (sum scores) or by generating the scale mean score. This BSSS has a Cronbach’s alpha level of 0.83. Validity is evident in many studies (Schulz & Schwarzer, 2003; Schulz & Schwarzer, 2004). In this study Cronbach’s alpha level was .876.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) (see Appendix E) has a Cronbach's alpha level of 0.83. In this study Cronbach's alpha level was .873. This Self-esteem scale is a ten-item scale that includes positive and negative statements, such as 'I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others' and 'All in all, I am inclined to feel a failure'. Participants were asked to answer these items using a four-point Likert scales, from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (3). Items 3,5,8,9, and 10 were reversed scored. The scale ranges from 0-30. Scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range, scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

A debriefing sheet included a short thank you message for participants taking part in the survey. It included contact details of support services which they may find useful or helpful. They were reminded that once the submit button was hit, their survey was completed, and it was not possible to opt out of survey at that stage (see Appendix F). IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 was used for statistical analysis

2.4 Analysis

Resilience, self-esteem and social support are the key variables (DV's) researched. Gender, context which lead to job loss and their current status other variables (IV's). The following Hypotheses were tested using independent sample t-tests, Pearson's correlation and additional analysis using a one-way between groups ANOVA.

H1: Resilience, Social Support and Self Esteem (DV) levels are significantly different for males and females (IV) following job loss in mid-life.

H2: There will be a positive correlation between Resilience and Self-Esteem (DV)

H3: There will be a positive correlation between Social Support and Self-Esteem (DV)

H4: Self-Esteem (DV) levels are significantly different for those who face job loss in mid-life through redundancy versus retirement (IV)

2.5 Ethics

Survey was totally anonymous. No compensation as given for completion of questionnaire. Compliance with professional code of ethics as per the Dublin Business School Ethical Guidelines for Research and Human Participants and the PSI Code of Professional Ethics 2011. Completing the Resilience, Self-esteem and Social Support questionnaire may have brought up some sensitivities and concerns for participants, respect for participants was shown as they could opt out at any stage along the process. It was clearly highlight that once completed survey was submitted this was taken as consent to participate in this survey and it was not possible to opt out at that stage. Self-selection was paramount. These factors were point of focus to mitigate against any harm or distress to participants, as some may be seeking new opportunities and might be experiencing difficulties and therefore may be feeling low and or stressed. Participants who were not seeking new opportunities may have feelings of loneliness or a sense of isolation, as the social support and sense of belonging they experienced with employment is gone.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample for this study consisted of 121 participants, females (n=73) accounts for 60% and males (n=48) account for 40%. Descriptive statistics outlined in chart below included age bands, from 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-70 and 71+, reasons for leaving work redundancy or retirement, their current status, retired, semi-retire, seeking full-time work or seeking part-time work, working full-time in paid work or working part-time in paid work. This information was captured to analyse the psychological variables of Resilience Social Support and Self-Esteem.

Table 1 *Demographic Descriptive Statistics for Participants*

Characteristics	N	%
<u>Gender Split</u>		
Male	48	40
Female	73	60
<u>Age Split</u>		
50-54	20	17
55-59	33	27
60-64	32	26
65-69	24	20
70+	12	10
<u>Reason for Leaving Employment</u>		
Redundancy	61	50
Retirement	60	50
<u>Current Status</u>		
Retired	47	39
Semi-retired	12	10
Seek full-time work	9	7
Seek part-time work	4	3
Paid work full-time	19	16
Paid work part-time	19	16
Self-Employed	11	9

The age split in Table 1 shows that 70% (n =85) of participants were under 64 years of age and 30% (n = 36) were over 65 years of age, which is the official retirement, pension age. However, 39% (n = 47) identified as retired and 10% (n = 12) as semi-retired.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach's Alpha for Resilience, Social Support and Self-Esteem*

	Resilience	Social Support	Self-Esteem
Cronbach's Alpha	0.872	0.876	0.873
Mean	3.39	53.68	22.02
SD	0.77	7.32	4.83
Variance	0.59	53.63	23.34
Skewness	-0.4	-0.56	-0.42
Kurtosis	-0.77	0.04	0.28
Range	3.17	37	23
Min	1.83	30	7
Max	5	67	30

All measurements demonstrate good internal reliability, Alpha scores for resilience, 0.872, social support 0.876 and self-esteem 0,873. The mean, SD and variance scores for resilience are lower than social support and self-esteem, (mean = 3.39, SD = 0.77, variance= 0.59). Min and Max values for resilience are also lower than other two variables (min = 1.83, max = 5)

3.2 Inferential Statistics

The objective of this quantitative correlation questionnaire study was to determine the differences and correlations of resilience, social support and self-esteem, coping resources used by individuals who experienced job loss in mid-life. An independent sample t-test was used to determine the differences by gender for resilience, social support and self-esteem. This test was also used to determine if the context of job loss redundancy or retirement had an impact on individual's self-esteem. Pearson's correlations co-efficient was used to analyse the correlation between Resilience and Self-Esteem and Social Support and Self-Esteem. Additional analysis was carried using a one way between groups ANOVA to determine if age was a factor for these variables. Self-esteem was identified as significant. Independent sample t-tests were run for each age segment. The following outlines the results pertaining to the hypothesis and the additional analysis on age.

Hypothesis 1: *Resilience, Social Support and Self Esteem levels are significantly different for males and females following job loss in mid-life.*

An independent samples t-test found that there was no statistically significant difference between females (mean = 3.36, SD = .78) and males (mean = 3.46, SD = .78) on the Resilience scale ($t(119) = .73, P = .47$). The 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -.18 and .40. Therefore, the null cannot be rejected.

An independent samples t-test found that there was no statistically significant difference between females (mean = 54.53, SD = 7.80) and males (mean = 52.40, SD = 6.42) on the Social Support Scale ($t(119) = -1.60, P = .12$). The 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -.481 and 0.54. Therefore, the null cannot be rejected

An independent samples t-test found that there was no statistically significant difference between females (mean = 21.43, SD = 5.0) and males (mean = 23.0, SD = 4.6) on the Self-Esteem ($t(119) = 1.65, P = .100$). The 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -.286 and 3.24. Therefore, the null cannot be rejected

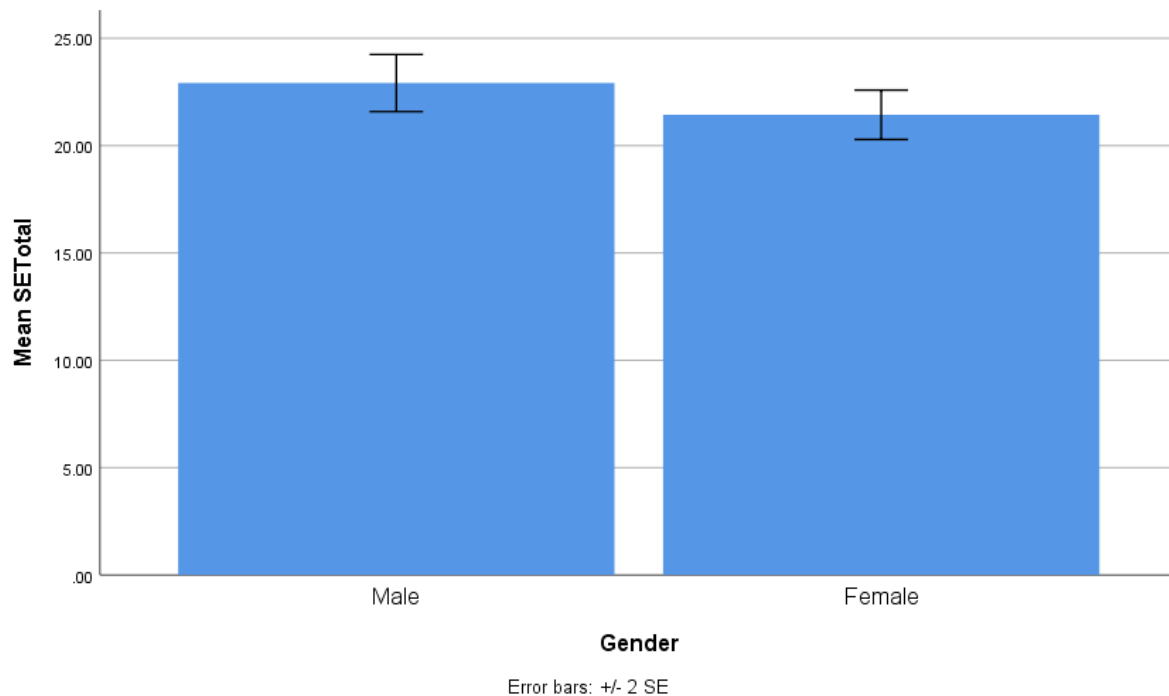


Figure 1 Bar chart highlighting differences between gender (x axis) and self-esteem (y axis)

As seen in the graph above (Figure 1), there is a very slight difference in self-esteem levels between males and females, but not significant. Sample size of males is smaller than female.

Hypothesis 2: *There will be a positive correlation between Resilience and Self-Esteem.*

A Pearson correlation coefficient found that there was a strong positive significant relationship between Resilience ($M = 3.39, SD = .77$) and Self Esteem ($M = 22.02, SD = 4.83$) ($r(121) = .536, p < .01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

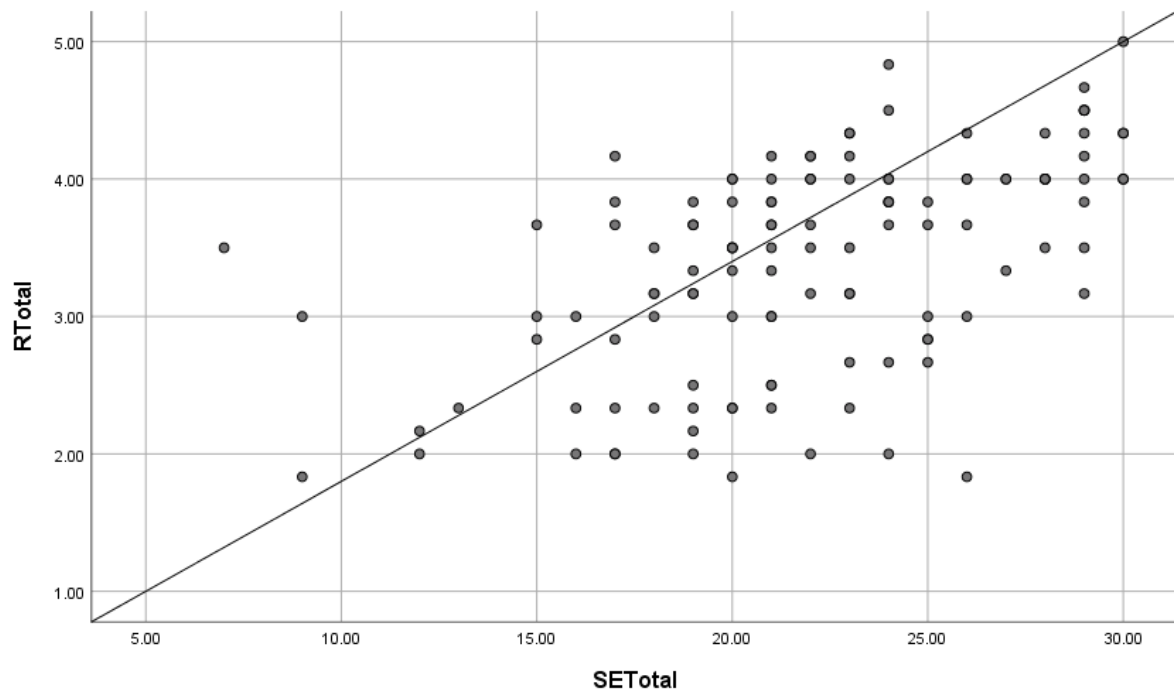


Figure 2 Scatter-plot diagram showing positive correlations between self-esteem (x axis) and resilience (y axis)

The scatterplot above (Figure 2) shows the positive correlation between self-esteem and resilience. However, there are some outliers which are discussed in the additional analysis on age groups section later in the paper.

Hypothesis 3: *There will be a positive correlation between Social Support and Self-Esteem.*

A Pearson correlation coefficient found that there was a strong positive significant relationship between Social Support ($M = 53.68$, $SD = 7.32$) and Self Esteem (mean = 22.02, $SD = 4.83$) ($r(121) = .329$, $p < .01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

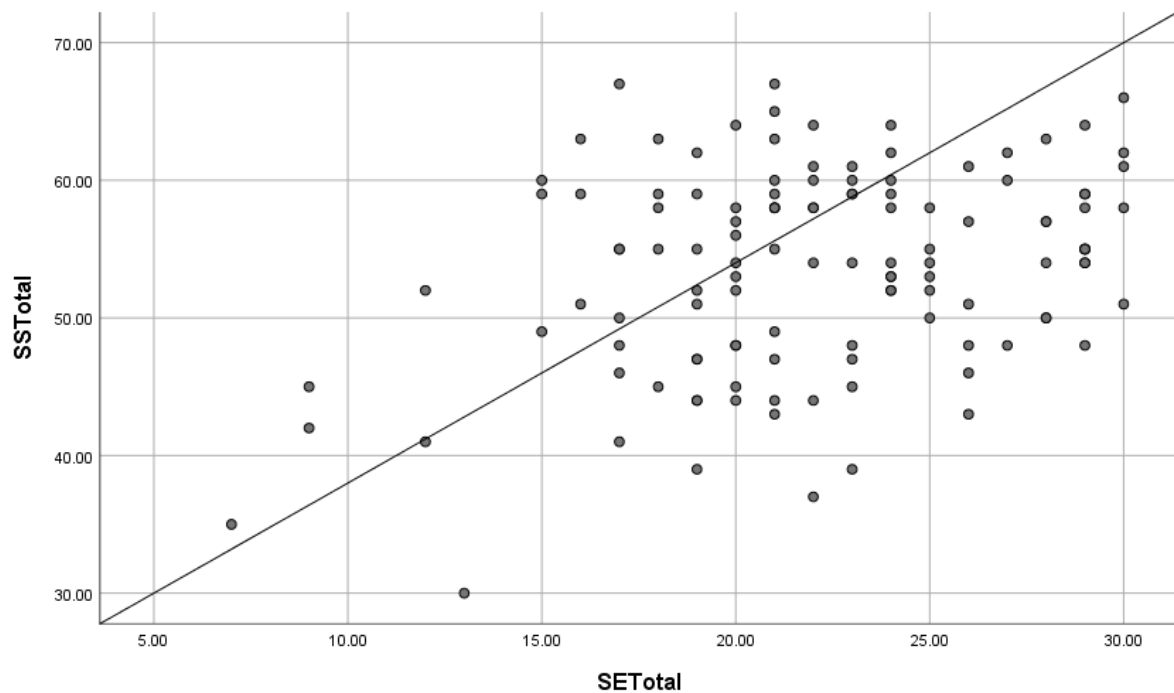


Figure 3 Scatter-plot diagram showing positive correlations between self-esteem (x axis) and resilience (y axis)

The scatterplot above (Figure 3) shows the positive correlation between self-esteem and social support. There are some outliers which are discussed in the additional analysis on age groups section later in the paper

Hypothesis 4: *Self-Esteem levels are significantly different for those who face job loss in mid-life through redundancy versus retirement*

An independent samples t-test found that there was no statistically significance between retirement (mean = 22.63, SD = 5.11) and redundancy (mean = 21.42, SD = 4.49) on the self-esteem scale. ($t(119) = -1.37, p = .170$). The 95% confidence limits show that the population

mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -2.94 and .525. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

Previous research highlighted that self-esteem changes for older adults. Additional tests were run on this data using a one way between groups ANOVA to check if self-esteem levels were significant between the different age groups included in this study.

A one-way analysis of variance showed that mean Self Esteem scores differed significantly between the five age groups ($F, (4,116) = 3.15, p = .017$). Tukey HSD post hoc results were non-significant.

To establish the age segments that showed the significance, independent samples t-tests were run for all age segments. Age segments 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-70, 71+.

An independent samples t-test found that there was statistically significance between 50-54 age group (mean = 19.80, SD = 4.23) and 60-64 age group (mean = 23.18, SD = 4.83) on the self-esteem scale ($t(50) = -2.57, p = .013$). The 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -6.03 and -.743.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected

An independent samples t-test found that there was statistically significance between 50-54 age group (mean = 19.80, SD = 4.23) and 65-70 age group (mean = 23.29, SD = 4.22) on the self-esteem scale ($t(42) = -2.72, p = .009$). The 95% confidence limits show that the population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -6.07 and -.90.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected

An independent samples t-test found that there was statistically significance between 50-54 age group (mean = 19.80, SD = 4.23) and 71+ age group (mean = 23.75, SD = 4.39) on the self-esteem scale ($t(30) = -2.51, p = .017$). The 95% confidence limits show that the

population mean difference of the variables lies somewhere between -7.15 and $-.74$.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected

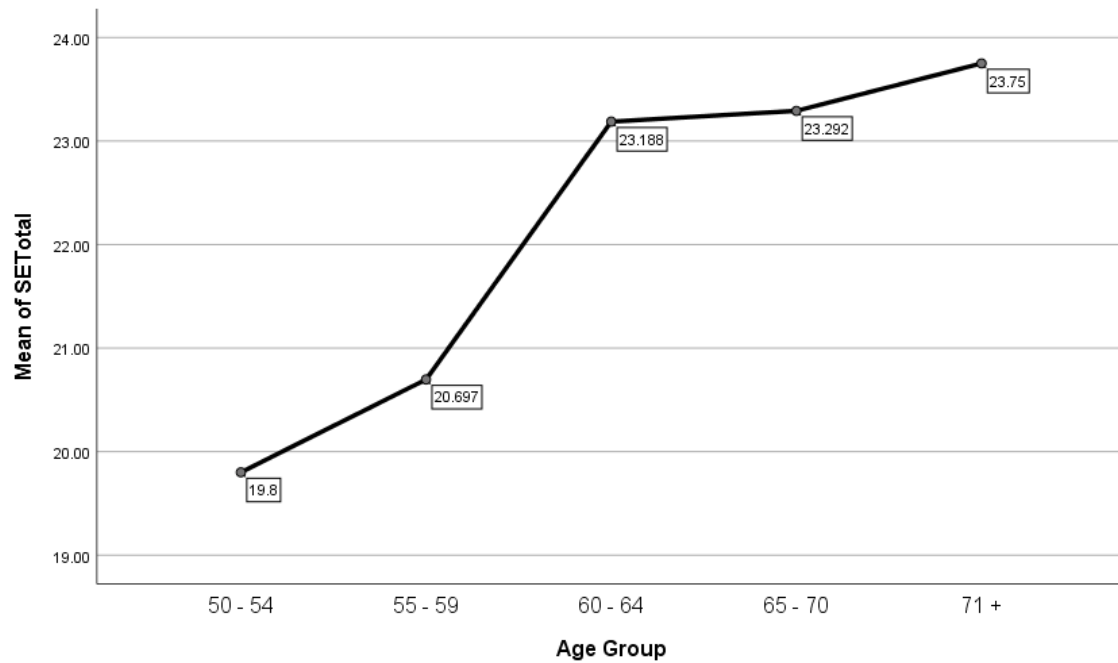


Figure 4 Means Plot showing the differences in self-esteem (y axis) across age groups (x axis)

As seen in the graph above (Figure 4), the age groups above 60-64 scored higher in self-esteem, with the age group 50-54 scoring lowest. Note this age group has a small sample size.

4. DISCUSSION

In the context of longevity and the changing landscape of work, the aim of this study was to understand if coping strategies such as resilience, social support and self-esteem were evident when an individual experienced job loss through redundancy or retirement and are over fifty years of age. Did this transition, which is different to earlier transitions in life have an impact on these coping resources. Brand (2015) highlighted that much research is focussed on the economic side of job loss, it is very important that wider psychological areas need to be examined. This research aimed to establish if more attention needs to be given to psychological supports for individual who experience job loss after a long career, all participants were between 50 and 71+ years of age. Seventy percent (n=85) were under 65 years of age and thirty-nine percent (n=47) identified as retired. Sixty-one percent (n=82) identified as semi-retired or seeking employment or employed. Therefore, extending the retirement age beyond 65 years to 68 years may be an issue for some individuals, if they do not have a private pension, as this study points to individuals identifying as retired and under 65 years.

In this study no statistically, significant difference was found in levels of resilience, social support and self-esteem for males and females following job loss (H1). A positive correlation was identified between resilience and self-esteem (H2). A positive correlation was found between social support and self-esteem (H3). No statistically significant difference was found in levels of self-esteem for those who experience job loss through redundancy versus retirement (H4).

The ANOVA which was run between the measures of resilience, social support and self-esteem and the various age groups, a significant difference in self-esteem in the 50-54 age group and the 60-64, 65-70, and the 71+ age groups was found. While a correlation was found between self-esteem and resilience and self-esteem and social support, no significance was found between the various age groups and resilience and social support.

4.1 Previous Research

Self-esteem is linked to an individual's self-concept, self-worth. Redundancy may be an alienating experience for an individual, and they may experience feelings of social isolation, powerlessness or shame (Vickers & Parris, 2007). An individual may experience a drop in personal status following job loss and changes in a person's self-esteem may be linked to feelings of shame (Ellison et al., 2014). In this study the 50-54 age group came through as the group with lower feelings of self-esteem following job loss. In the correlations between resilience and self-esteem, an outlier identified with low self-esteem and low resilience, was male in the 50-54 age group who had experienced redundancy but was working full time. In the correlation between self-esteem and social support, an outlier was found with low self-esteem and low social support, was male and in the 50-54 age group who had experienced redundancy and working full-time in paid employment. Another outlier identified with low self-esteem and low social support, was female in the 55-59 age group who was retired and identified as semi-retired. Job loss can have a negative impact on women as well as men (Warr, 1984). It is important to develop social networks outside work as, a reduction in social networks may lead to lower self-esteem (Orth et al., 2015).

A longitudinal study found that self-esteem peaks at about 60-70 years and then decreases in old age. (Orth et al., 2018). McKee-Ryan & Harvey, (2011) found that social support for the unemployed has a positive influence on psychological factors. A job provides a source of identity, social relations, self-concept and identity. Work may be central to a person's ego and identity (Brand, 2015). To secure a new role following redundancy or taking early retirement, social support is an important factor, if families are non-supportive, self-confidence may be affected (Caplan et al., 1998). No significance was found for social support in this study, self-esteem identified as having a significance in the 50-54 age group, however, a correlation was found between social support and self-esteem which is noteworthy.

Erickson and Erickson (1997) identified the 45-65 years as a time of stagnation or generativity. Are the individuals in this study in the 50-54 age group who have lower self-esteem than those in the older age groups feeling a sense of stagnation in mid-life. Do they have feelings of loss in opportunity, identity, purpose as a result of the pattern of life collapsing which may make them feel powerless and vulnerable (Handy, 1985, p.165). These negative feelings may lead them to take a position or role that does not satisfy or enrich them. The employment or role that an individual takes on following redundancy in their 50's may not be at a similar level or status of their previous role. Solove et al., (2015) discuss the concept of underemployment or bridge employment, whereby individuals find work that does not match their abilities, knowledge or skills. This may therefore impact on their identity, self-concept and self-esteem. The financial need to work may be their driver, as someone in their 50's may have eighteen years to work before they would be eligible for the state pension, this is really another career life-time. Their first career may have been for twenty-five years, there is therefore time for another career. If an individual is re-entering the workforce following job loss, different skills and knowledge may be required. It is important to include personal development into this mix. What is the mind-set, of the individual, do they have a sense of self-belief and self-worth that they can get a job?

McKee-Ryan et al, (2005) research highlighted that there is a link between internal coping resources such as self-esteem and external coping sources such as social support and the wellbeing of the unemployed. Solove et al., (2015) developed a path model for re-employment, which is broken into emotion focussed and problem focused elements. There are four areas feeding into each of these areas which include self-esteem and social support as well as economic factors such as financial difficulty and financial need to work. While there are many support structures around the financial elements of job loss, the psychological coping

factors are not as well serviced. It is important that individuals who experience job loss, feel empowered to seek help and support for non-financial factors.

Transition in mid-life is different to earlier transitions, and the loose networks which an individual may have, may be more important at this stage of life. Grattan & Scott (2016) highlight that sometimes the people who are closest to us do not want us to change and this is more evident at this stage of life, “because the people who know you best are the very ones most likely to hinder transformation rather than help it” (p.95).

Thirty years ago, research found that retirement may have a negative effect on individuals (Hanisch & Hulin 1990). Nalin & Franca (2015) found that resilience had an impact on wellbeing in retirement. In this study redundancy or retirement did not have a significant impact on resilience, social support or self-esteem. Life experiences have no doubt enabled older people to build their resilience to potential challenges at this time of life and a belief that they can cope. The participants in this survey may be more financially secure than individuals in previous research which was conducted following recession in the 1990’s.

4.2 Strengths and Limitations

Much research has pointed to the importance of self-esteem following job loss, a strength of this research being that it is evident in this research too. Demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status, education reached, duration of unemployment was not captured which indicates some limitations with the study. The sample may not be representative of the population who have experienced job loss. Socio economic status is a predictor of self-esteem, again this was not captured in this survey. Level of education is a factor which determines how an individual may cope with job loss and the ability to gain future employment if that is a requirement. If re-employment is necessary, duration of job loss may impact on this which may have an influence on a person’s coping resources such as self-esteem. The level of achievement

or legacy that an individual has gained in their working lives may impact their resilience and self-esteem, this was not identified in this survey. All participants completed the survey on-line which eliminated potential participants who are not active on-line or have access to quality broadband. Relationship status was also not captured which may have shown a bias toward a particular status which may have impacted on social support scores.

4.3 Future Research

Education status and employment status are factors which influence how an individual will cope with job loss, therefore further research should include these characteristics. Personality traits and life satisfaction are two variables which could give a better understanding of the impact of job loss in mid-life. If someone is more optimistic and agreeable versus showing traits of neuroticism, may lead to better coping skills outcomes for an individual. If individuals can expect to have multiple careers in the future, to establish if previous experience of redundancy influenced an individual's coping resources, would be another area of interest for research.

4.4 Implications

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in Eurozone, between 2012 and 2018 eighty five percent of the ten million new jobs created were filled by personnel aged between 55 and 74 years (*The EU's Reliance on Older Workers*, n.d.). In the context of an aging workforce and population, how older workers are perceived may need to change. To ensure older employees are engaged and connected to the business, retraining may be required. However, it is important to ensure that some element of personal development are included in the training mix to enable employees to adopt the right attitude and mind-set to embrace the changes, as well as training for the younger workers to be open

to the learnings from the older employees (*The EU's Reliance on Older Workers*, n.d.) otherwise feelings of resentment may arise.

Some of the larger tech companies whose workforce is younger are running programmes to attract 'returners', i.e. Individuals who may have been out of the workforce for up to ten years but have experience. While the companies have roles to fill, they have identified the benefit of having a mix of generations. Older generations experience may help with emotional stability which is an element in decision-making processes. Diversity by age and gender may have a role to play in performance and well-being in public organisations (Wegge et al., 2008). In recruitment processes diversity is encouraged but is the age pillar being ignored.

4.5 Conclusions

Mid-life is a time of psychosocial development, with positive and negatives influences for individuals. Resilience, social support and self-esteem were the coping variables researched in this study and the impact on individuals over fifty years of age who experienced job loss. Individuals in mid-life have developed levels of resilience as a result of the natural adversities that occur in life. Resilience was not impacted by job loss in this study.

Human connections are important for health and wellbeing. Loss of the structure of social support facilities may have an impact on an individual who does not have a separate network. For individuals seeking new roles or careers, social support is an important factor in this search. In this study job loss did not have an impact on social support.

Job loss affects a persons' sense of purpose, identify and therefore may affect self-esteem for some individuals, which was identified in this study for the 50-54 age group. This research highlights the importance of supporting the individual's concept of self, following job loss in their fifties. They may appear to have high levels of resilience, i.e. *I can cope*. However, there internal sense of self-worth may be challenged. This is the area that needs attention and

support to ensure they make the right decision for them, for their next career, for the next fifteen to twenty years, in the context of longevity. Having the right mind-set not just the right 'financial-set' is vital for a successful transition following job loss in mid-life. For employees facing job loss in mid-life, organisations should nurture a positive mind-set versus avoidance or withdrawal strategies which individuals may adopt. Organisations and governments will need to adopt a fresh approach and re-think how they can help individuals develop their coping resources, following job loss as a result of Covid-19 in 2020.

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APPENDIX A**INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Ann Byrne and I am conducting research in the Department of Psychology, Dublin Business School that explores the coping strategies, resilience, self-esteem and social support, for individual who has experienced job loss in mid-life. This research is being conducted as part of my studies and will be submitted for examination.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing and returning the attached anonymous survey. While the survey asks some questions that might cause some minor negative feelings, it has been used widely in research. If any of the questions do raise difficult feelings for you, contact information for support services are included on the final page.

Participation is anonymous and confidential. Thus, responses cannot be attributed to any one participant. For this reason, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been completed and submitted. You have the right to withdraw at any time up to the final submission of the survey.

The questionnaires will be securely stored and data from the questionnaires will be transferred to electronic format for analysis on IBM SPSS statistics 26. All data will be stored on a password protected computer. This data will be destroyed one year after the examination board has published their results.

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

Should you require any further information about this research, please contact

Ann Byrne, my email address is [xxxxxx]. My supervisor Dr. Stephen Fitzgerald can be contacted at [ixxxxx].

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If participant chooses not to continue with questionnaire this note will appear:

I am sorry you were not in a position to continue with it at this time. If you find the time at a later date, please follow the original link to take the survey

APPENDIX B**General Demographic Questions:**

1. What is our gender?

Female Male

2. What age group are you in –

Please tick relevant box

50-54	<input type="checkbox"/>
55-59	<input type="checkbox"/>
60-64	<input type="checkbox"/>
65-70	<input type="checkbox"/>
71+	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which of the following best describes how you left employment?

Please tick relevant box

Redundancy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retirement	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Which of the following best describes your current position?

Please highlight most relevant

- Retired
- Semi-retired
- Looking for full time work
- Looking for part time work
- Working full time in paid work
- Working part time in paid work
- Other

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRES AND SCORING DETAILS

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (Smith et al., 2008)

Please respond to each item by marking one box per row.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1	I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times					
2	I have a hard time making it through stressful events					
3	It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.					
4	It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.					
5	I usually come through difficult times with little trouble					
6	I tend to take a long time to get over set-backs in my life.					

APPENDIX D

BERLIN SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALES (BSSS) (Schwarzer & Schulz 2000)

On reading each statement, think of persons who are close to you, and tick the relevant box

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Somewhat Disagree 3: Somewhat Agree 4: Strongly Agree

	STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1 PES	There are some people who truly like me.				
2 PES	Whenever I am not feeling well, other people show me that they are fond of me.				
3 PES	Whenever I am sad, there are people who cheer me up.				
4 PES	There is always someone there for me when I need comforting				
5 PIS	I know some people upon whom I can always rely.				
6 PIS	When I am worried, there is someone who helps me.				
7 PIS	There are people who offer me help when I need it.				
8 PIS	When everything becomes too much for me to handle, others are there to help me.				
9 NS	When I am down, I need someone to boosts my spirits				
10 NS	It is important for me always to have someone who listens to me.				
11 NS	Before making any important decisions, I absolutely need a second opinion.				
12 NS	I get along best without any outside help				
13 SS.	In critical situations, I prefer to ask others for their advice.				
14. SS	Whenever I am down, I look for someone to cheer me up again				
15 SS.	When I am worried, I reach out to someone to talk to				
16. SS	If I do not know how to handle a situation, I ask others what they would do.				
17 SS.	Whenever I need help, I ask for it.				

APPENDIX E

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE (Rosenberg, M. 1979)

Below are 10 statements, please tick the box that most relevant to you.

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

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. New York: Basic Books

APPENDIX F**Debrief**

If you have been affected by any of these questions the following are some useful support initiatives

Seeking support -

Smarartians: www.smaritans.org/ireland/branches Tel: 116 123

Aware: www.aware.ie Tel: 1800 80 48 48 - Mon-Sun 10am to 10pm

Active Retirement: www.activeirl.ie Tel: 01 873 3836

Meet-up www.meetup.com/cities/ie

Seeking employment:

Local enterprise centres: www.localenterprise.ie