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How the Professional world Operates without the Acknowledgement that Women are the Primary Caregivers of the World

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Abstract

Despite the valuable primary caregiving role that women play in society, the professional world can often overlook the implications that this can have for a working mother's professional life and development. This paper analyses how the professional world operates without the acknowledgement that women are the primary caregivers of the world, and the subsequent challenges and barriers women face in their professional day-to-day. Upon the completion of an extensive review of existing literature, qualitative and quantitative research, as well as the utilisation of existing theories, it has been concluded that societal attitudes, historical societal roles, institutional policies, organisational culture and individual attitudes all contribute to the way in which working mothers are treated within an environment of paid employment. Through a survey of 208 participants and qualitative interviews with 7 women with caregiving commitments who have been employed within the professional world, this paper found that enacting family friendly policies in the professional world, as well as acknowledging the biases and potential for discrimination that currently face working women with familial commitments against their childless counterparts is imperative to ensure working mothers can continue to contribute to the world of employment. It was found that 69% of the quantitative survey participants of this study have had to change their employment status at some point in time (besides maternity leave) because of their caregiving commitments (e.g. move to part time, leave their job). This paper demonstrates how the professional world must recognise its current contribution to the part that it plays in inhibiting women with caregiving commitments from reaching their fullest professional potential and make actions to facilitate a move towards a more inclusive and equitable environment for those in society with caregiving responsibilities to be able to realise their highest professional capabilities.

Abstracto

A pesar del valioso papel de cuidadoras primarias que desempeñan las mujeres en la sociedad, el mundo profesional puede pasar por alto a menudo las implicaciones que esto puede tener para la vida y el desarrollo profesional de una madre trabajadora. Este trabajo analiza cómo el mundo profesional funciona sin reconocer que las mujeres son las cuidadoras primarias del mundo, y los consiguientes retos y barreras a los que se

enfrentan las mujeres en su día a día profesional. Tras una exhaustiva revisión de la literatura existente, la investigación cualitativa y cuantitativa, así como la utilización de las teorías existentes, se ha llegado a la conclusión de que las actitudes sociales, los roles sociales históricos, las políticas institucionales, la cultura organizativa y las actitudes individuales contribuyen a la forma en que las madres trabajadoras son tratadas en un entorno de empleo remunerado. A través de una encuesta realizada a 208 participantes y de entrevistas cualitativas a 7 mujeres con responsabilidades familiares que han trabajado en el mundo profesional, este documento concluye que es imperativo promulgar políticas favorables a la familia en el mundo profesional, así como reconocer los prejuicios y el potencial de discriminación a los que se enfrentan actualmente las mujeres trabajadoras con responsabilidades familiares frente a sus homólogas sin hijos, para garantizar que las madres trabajadoras puedan seguir contribuyendo al mundo laboral. Se descubrió que el 69% de las participantes en la encuesta cuantitativa de este estudio han tenido que cambiar su situación laboral en algún momento (aparte de la baja por maternidad) debido a sus compromisos como cuidadoras (por ejemplo, pasar a trabajar a tiempo parcial, dejar su trabajo). Este documento demuestra cómo el mundo profesional debe reconocer su contribución actual al papel que desempeña en la inhibición de las mujeres con responsabilidades de cuidadoras para alcanzar su máximo potencial profesional y tomar medidas para facilitar el avance hacia un entorno más inclusivo y equitativo para que las personas de la sociedad con responsabilidades de cuidadoras puedan desarrollar sus máximas capacidades profesionales.

Key words and abbreviations

working women, professional world, caregiving role, familial commitment, employment, mother, maternity leave

Introduction

Being a mother is the equivalent of working two and a half full time jobs (*Petter, 2018*). But women are not turning away from their family obligations, instead they are having to learn how to balance their professional and parental duties side by side. As a matter of fact, the number of women of a childbearing age trying to learn how to become both

employee and mom of the year is actually increasing, with the total number of women in the labour force expected to continue to rise over the next eight years (*Gurchiek, 2023*).

Some would argue that significant progress has been made with respect to women's participation in the working world, in the US in 1970, only 43% of women of a working age were in employment (*PRB, 2001*), meanwhile fast forward to 2023 and the labour force participation rate for women has increased to 56.1% (*Catalyst, 2022*)

However, it is not the level of female employment achieved that this research is debating, but more so this research aims to demonstrate the level of fairness and quality of this employment, in the eyes of the women that participate in it. This thesis will also highlight how the personal commitments bestowed upon working mothers and the ensuing view that the professional world has on them, hinder their professional development and create significant barriers to progress in an organisational hierarchy.

However, even though the participation of women in the workplace is progressing, this doesn't mean that the attitude towards women in the workplace is following in its footsteps, with a survey conducted in the United States outlining that 4 in 10 of the participants say that they have faced some type of gender discrimination in the workplace (*Parker & Funk, 2017*).

This research will aim to illustrate the way in which employers and the culture of the workplace does not possess a supportive nature for those women in employment who possess a caregiving role in their lives. It has been demonstrated time and time again that working mothers are being left out of the conversation when it comes to workplace welfare, with a lack of flexible working hours, insufficient or even sometimes non-existent paid family leave after giving birth or adopting a child, to job demotions or even job dismissals received within the timeline of maternity leave. Nearly 30.6% of the 31,000 cases of pregnancy discrimination filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) were cases where women alleged that they were discharged for becoming pregnant (*National Partnership for Women & Families, 2016*).

It has been noted that factors contribute to the treatment of women with familial commitments in a workplace environment. Societal attitudes and frameworks, organisational culture and individual attitudes all leave working mothers participating on an unequal playing field against their childless female, and male counterparts. This thesis will also examine how barriers such as pay, hiring and promotional discrimination render working mothers at a disadvantage in the professional world, as well as elements such as parental leave, employment law and institutional policies.

Highlighting the discrimination faced and the experiences had by women in their professional capacity, who possess a caregiving role in their personal life, is imperative in order to point out and rectify the shortcomings experienced by women in the workplace. This type of research needs to be carried out in order to equip us with the knowledge to be able set about fostering a more inclusive and equal corporate culture in today's professional climate.

In this thesis I will aim to illustrate through pre-existing research and research which I have conducted, that the way in which the professional world operates today, carries out its business without bearing in mind that women are the primary caregivers of the world, and instead of being met with acknowledgment, they are faced with discrimination and barriers that impede their professional endeavours and development.

One of the objectives which I will seek to achieve throughout the course of my research will be of a diagnostic nature, meaning I will investigate the factors and barriers contributing to the way in which working mothers and women in employment who possess a caregiving role in their personal life, are treated in the working world.

Through the investigation of a literature review, I will strive to examine past events and trends of the treatment of working women who have had a caregiving role, in order to better understand their significance and importance.

I will also aim to conduct qualitative exploratory research, to gauge the individual experiences and perspectives from this research group in order to better understand their

views on being a woman in the working world with familial commitments, as well as a quantitative research survey to interpret the experiences of a wider cohort of this demographic that would be possible with only qualitative interviews.

Additionally, I will strive to outline propositions that the working world could implement, for the purpose of creating a working environment and culture that fosters the professional development of, and greater acknowledges the professional well-being of working mothers and those women in the workforce with familial responsibilities.

I endeavoured to fulfill my predetermined research objectives, which consist of;

R1: What factors contribute to the treatment experienced by women in the professional world, who have caregiving and family commitments?

R2: What are the current opinions of women with familial responsibilities that have been employed or are employed in the professional world, with regards to how they are treated?

R3: What experiences have women with family obligations, who are employed or have been employed in the working world had, and what are their perspectives on matters relevant to balancing caregiving and employment?

R4: What recommendations do women with caregiving commitments have for the professional world that promote greater professional development while also acknowledging their personal responsibilities?.

The experiences and challenges of women in the workforce is a research area that is comprehensively documented. However, the existing research does not always differentiate exclusively between those women who have caregiving responsibilities outside of working hours, and how these familial commitments exacerbate the barriers to achieving professional actualisation.

Therefore, the research I have undertaken will focus exclusively on women with caregiving commitments who participate in the professional world, or whose personal commitments have actually diminished their participation or prompted their departure from professional employment.

This research process utilises a mixed method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodology to depict the experiences that working women with familial commitments have or have had in the professional world. Having conducted in-depth interviews with 7 participants and surveying 208 respondents, it was revealed that societal attitudes and pre-existing perceptions of the differing roles that mothers and fathers play, institutional policies, organisational attitudes, as well as a lack of family friendly policies contribute to the treatment women are subjected to within the professional world, as well as the implications that this has for a working mother's working life and professional development. Additionally, I will present the results and subsequent analysis of my findings that will illustrate this.

My motivations for researching and investigating this particular research area, stem from observing those women who I am surrounded by in my life, that have had to diminish their career potential in order to fit the image and keep up with the never-ceasing responsibilities of being the perfect, dependable and selfless maternal figure, which society has forced them into fitting into. This unobtainable task is reiterated through research with 67% of working mothers stating that their career stalled after having children (*PM Editorial, 2022*).

Empirically, I have focused my qualitative research on the experiences of women in Ireland who act in a care-giving/maternal role who are currently in employment or had previously been in employment but had to resign due to familial commitments. One of these participants was of a working age whenever Ireland still imposed "The Marriage Bar". This law required Irish women to resign from their employment once married, and as a result gaining a caregiver or maternal role (*Feenane, 2022*). The law was only lifted in 1973 and many women are still experiencing the impact of this restrictive and discriminatory legislation, with many collecting reduced pensions years later,

illustrating the pay discrimination endured by working women, even well after their employment has ceased.

It could even be disputed that the progress made in recent years in terms of women's rights and gender equality in the workplace is leaving men out of the conversation, with nearly half of all male respondents in a survey of over 2,000 Australians declaring that “gender equality strategies in the workplace do not take men into account” (*Global Council for Tolerance and Peace 2018*). Yet, my research will prove that it could be argued that the investment in ensuring that male employees, including those with familial responsibilities, is unquestionably superior to the investment made in ensuring women within caregiving commitments continue to succeed within a professional capacity.

This thesis is structured in the following way. Following this introductory section, in Chapter 2, I will review the existing literature on working mothers and the treatment of women in the workplace who possess a caregiving role in their personal life. Chapter 3 will present the methodology utilised to realise the research objectives. In the chapter that follows, Chapter 4, the results of the quantitative and qualitative processes will be presented. Chapter 5 will feature a discussion of the data collected, as well as recommendations that arise as a result of the findings. Lastly, in Chapter 6 I will provide a conclusion that illustrates the overarching interpretations findings of this research project.

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this research and literature review is to gain an insight into the lives, experiences and challenges faced by those women in society who hold a place in the working world while simultaneously acting as a caregiver in their personal lives.

Furthermore, the qualitative and quantitative research that I have obtained from the participants of my research study will, alongside this review of the existing literature, aid in better understanding this demanding and increasingly more common lifestyle.

The subject of women in the workplace, is an important research area that has been studied extensively. Female participation in the workplace continues to increase, with significant progress being made due to a strong rise in the educational attainment level of women over the last 40 years, among other factors (*Australian Government- National Skills Commission, 2021*).

However, the existing research on the experiences and challenges faced by women in the workforce, does not always differentiate between those women who have or do not have family commitments outside of working hours. I am of the opinion that the discrimination and experiences that working mothers are subjected to as a result of their care giving commitments are not thoroughly examined to the same extent within the research that already exists.

Furthermore, the existing research does not wholly examine how the professional development and achievements of these women are impacted because of their family obligations. Therefore, it is these lines of inquiry which I will aim to examine throughout the course of this research.

Consequently, this literature review will not explore the treatment of those women in the professional world who are childless/who do not have a caregiving role within their personal lives.

Throughout this literature review I will not only strive to analyse this research area as a whole, but I will also seek to fulfil the numerous research objectives that I have by examining the pre-existing material on this matter.

For the purpose of gaining a global insight on the topic, and in order to explore the level of differentiation of the way in which women with familial commitments in the professional world are treated cross-culturally, I have analysed and included research gathered intercontinentally.

Hence, within this literature review, I will examine four fields of inquiry to better understand how the professional world interacts with working mothers and its shortcomings in this regard. The first area I will explore are the factors contributing to the treatment of working mothers in the workplace.

Following on from this, I will then examine this treatment with respect to gender discrimination and discrimination in the context of working mothers. Lastly, I will investigate a factor of the professional world that has been, is or will be a part of every current or future working mother's professional career, the issue of maternity leave, and lastly how the extent of a women's primary caregiving role can drive them to depart the professional world entirely.

1. Factors contributing to the treatment of working mothers in the workplace

It can be stated that an array of determinants give rise to the treatment experienced by working mothers in a professional environment. The factors that I will examine in this literature review pertain to three categories; societal attitudes, organisational culture and individual attitudes. As societal attitudes refers to society as a whole, the organisational culture and the individual attitudes within that society are then influenced by it, meaning that societal attitudes have an overarching effect on all three categories.

1.1 Societal attitudes

Societal attitudes refer to the opinions and beliefs generally held by the people in society, in this case, the opinions and beliefs of those in society on their views of the participation of working mothers within a business environment.

It has been noted that central to the struggles faced by working women with familial obligations, seems to be the embedded notions of motherhood held by both men and women in our society and culture (*Albright, 1992*). As a result, societal attitudes is the most onerous factor to overcoming the barriers and discrimination faced by working women who have a caregiving role in their personal life, due to the sheer scale at which these beliefs are held.

A study conducted over the course of 15 years at the University of Calicut revealed that there had been a positive trend in the attitude towards women in employment by the female participants of the study since 1998. However, 15 years later in 2013, it was evident that the same male participants still held a negative attitude towards women's employment (*Kuruville , 2014*).

A stereotype is a set of cognitive generalisations (e.g., beliefs, expectations) about the qualities and characteristics of the members of a group or social category (*American Psychological Association, 2018*), in this context working mothers. The stereotypes imposed upon women within society play a role in contributing to the mould that society thinks mothers should fit and this in turn impacts, and often hinders their professional world contributions. It was noted during a study conducted in the Netherlands that working mothers experience higher levels of guilt as a result of internalised gender stereotypes than fathers (*Aarntzen et al., 2023*). The findings highlight that stereotypes do not only shape our attitudes towards others within society, but also shape how working mothers themselves feel about their work-family commitments .

Moreover, the renowned work of Dorothy Dinnerstein (*1976*) argues that the societal attitude that exists towards the relationship between women with familial commitments and the notion of work is a social construct that has been upheld and reiterated over time. She contends that it is through the dissolution of this societal attitude that paves the way for women to move into a more economic and equitable relationship within the world of work.

1.2 Organisational culture

At a basic level, organisational culture may be defined as “the way we do things around here” or “the way we think about things around here” (*Williams, Dobson and Walters, 1993*). Therefore, the way that an organisation “does things” has a direct impact on those doing the work within the organisation.

During a study carried out in 2004 of financial sector companies in Scotland, it was indicated by the participants that having the *option* to have a healthy work-life balance, doesn't exactly make people feel as though they can *actually* achieve balance between their professional and personal lives. It was attested that it was the overall organisational culture that prompted employees to feel as though they have a health ratio between work and life commitments (*Bond, 2004*).

Family-friendly policies are defined as a set of decisions and actions that favour parents and caregivers so that they then can balance their work and family life (*UNICEF, 2024*). Almost six in ten employers (59%) say that family friendly policies have been essential to their talent strategy over the past three years. By offering these family-friendly policies, working women who possess a caregiving role, benefit significantly from this family-orientated culture. In the absence of these types of reforms, mothers are particularly penalised in their professional careers, with 43% of highly qualified mothers leaving the workforce due to family obligations (*Reward & Employee Benefits Association, 2022*).

It has been noted that policies implemented in professional environments are created and carried out without taking into consideration those women under their employment who have considerable obligations within their personal lives. This is causing a great adverse effect on these women, with the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reporting that, in every age range, women had higher rates of work-related stress, anxiety and depression than men, with women being 53% more stressed than their male counterparts (*HSE, 2018*).

It has been cited countless times that a flexible working culture is the key to supporting working mothers in both their professional and personal lives (*Asare, 2022*). A survey conducted in 2019 illustrated that nearly half (46%) of all Australian employees with caregiving obligations experienced scrutiny when using family-friendly work arrangements. It is contested that women are especially a victim of this, in a bias called "The Maternal Wall" (*Alonsagay, 2020*), which alludes to the notion that "when a childless woman is not in the office, she is presumed to be on business. However, an

absent working mother is often thought to be grappling with child care” (Williams, 2004).

1.3. Individual attitudes

“Our attitude towards life determines life’s attitude towards us”- John Mitchell.

The attitudes possessed by those women in our society who possess a caregiving role are a contributor to the part that they play in the professional world, and this dictates how the professional world in turn treats them.

It has been found in previous research that the level of participation (i.e, full time, part time or those who did not engage in paid employment), of working mothers contributed to their attitudes towards work commitments and motherhood (Houston & Marks, 2002). As well as this, women who operated within a capacity of full time employment agreed less strongly that mothers should be the primary caregivers of their children. It was also highlighted that the social class of working mothers did not relate to their work behaviour and their individual attitudes that they held towards employment.

Women with familial commitments who participate in the working world often must take a more pragmatic approach to their employment than their childless counterparts. However, this is due to a lack of dedication to their career, but rather the knock-on effect of the societal expectations that they face. Therefore, their interests and priorities may lay elsewhere, resulting in a difference in their individual attitudes towards some aspects of their employment, in comparison with other demographics in the workplace. In this way, it has been shown that their attitudes towards company loyalty are positively correlated with organisations that can provide them with a better work-life balance (Kossek et al., 2011), in turn providing them with greater stability in their professional and personal life.

In a study conducted involving research gathered on 1,308 working mothers, the findings revealed that working mothers were no less committed to their organisation, and arguably even more committed than some of their colleagues in the early stages of

their employment. That being said, their attitudes were found to be different to that of their co-workers, with their career expectations having been found to be lower than those peers who did not have family commitments (*Chang et al., 2014*).

However, it should be noted that positive career expectations play a pivotal role in an employee's performance. Without a lack of motivation and satisfaction, which are directly linked to career expectations, a worker's performance will be hindered (*Ahmad, Pervez & Jousar, 2020*), which can be the case for those working mothers who lack these elements in their employment. An inhibited performance does not bode well in today's professional world, and as a result, paves the way for these women to be treated less favourably by their childless colleagues who may be viewed to be outperforming them, when in actuality this isn't the case.

2. Gender discrimination and discrimination in the context of working mothers

Half of mothers have faced some form of discrimination at work (*Cave, 2023*). That means that either your mother or my mother has been discriminated against at some point within their professional career.

This alarming statistic has been enabled by the lack of legal implications employers face for discriminating against mothers and pregnant women in the workplace. In the United States, there is no federal law that specifically prohibits caregiver discrimination. It is then left to the devices of attorneys to make a case based solely off of sex discrimination (*Carrazana, 2023*).

The discrimination met by those women with family commitments has been coined "The Maternal Wall" by Joan C. Williams (*2004*). This metaphor illustrates how women who have experienced professional successes, may find their proficiency called into question should they become pregnant, take maternity leave, or adopt flexible work schedules.

2.1 Hiring process

Studies has shown that fatherhood status does not appear to negatively impact those men who are in search of employment (*Fuegen et al., 2004*), even though on the other hand, mothers are less likely to be hired, called back for an interview, given training opportunities, and are even more likely to be recommended for lower salaries compared to women without children (*Correll et al., 2007; Cuddy et al., 2004*).

Applying the logic with which “The Motherhood Penalty” is derived from (*Ridgeway & Correll, 2004*), mothers face a penalty in perceived competence and consequently are viewed as having a socially devalued status in the context of work, due to their role as primary caregivers. This results in them being seen to be less worthy and competent, and in turn, less desirable job candidates (*Cheung et al., 2022*).

One of the earliest studies conducted on hiring discrimination against mothers was an investigation of accounting firms, where resumes with the same credentials, with the only differing element being gender and parental status, were sent out for vacant positions (*Firth, 1982*). The study found that women were less likely to be called back than men, and the female participants who *had* children were subject to even more prejudice, as they were less likely to be called back than women without children.

Estimates of hiring discrimination against women could also be considered to be understated. Since childless female applicants do not state they are not parents, this does not mean recruiters do not make the assumption that these women have children, and as a result, face diminished hiring prospects regardless (*Ishizuka, 2021*).

2.2 Pay discrimination

“There is no such thing as a woman who doesn’t work. There is only a woman who isn’t paid for her work”- Carolina Criado Perez, Author of Invisible Women (2020, p.71)

It is indisputable that a gender pay gap is still in existence in the professional world of today. However, this gap is widened even further for those women who find themselves with caregiving responsibilities in their life. A gender pay gap exists in 94% of

professional occupations, with women making 83 cents on the dollar. However, even more startling is that this gap widens for mothers, who make just 74 cents on the dollar (Corbett, 2022). That works out to be a \$1,500 gap monthly, or \$18,000 annually (Sergent, 2023).

This pay discrimination exists so much so, that each year a day is dedicated to this sexist pay disparity. Coined “*Mother’s Equal Pay Day*”, the day sets about to recognise the wage gap for working mothers and look towards structural solutions to guarantee pay equity in the professional world (A Better Balance, 2023). The aim of the day is to illustrate how far into the year mothers must work to earn what fathers did last year alone. Equal Pay Day in 2023 was the 15th of August, meaning that 227 days elapsed until equal pay was achieved (Equal Rights Advocates, 2023).

Research has found that by the time a woman’s first child is 12 years old, her hourly pay rate is on average 33% behind a man’s (Baker McKenzie, 2023). Conversely, it has been found that men actually experience the opposite. Fathers incur an average wage increase of more than 6 percent per child, in a phenomenon popularly known as “*The Fatherhood Bonus*”. This is because fatherhood, in the eyes of the professional world, is deemed “a valued characteristic, signalling perhaps a greater work commitment, stability and deservingness”, whereas concomitantly, the professional world perceived mothers as “exhausted and distracted at work” (Elliott, 2017).

The discriminatory parameters of the gender pay gap do not solely impact the base salary of working women with familial commitments, it stretches even to the “take-home pay” that these women ultimately receive. In the case of the United States government, this societal governing institution accentuates the notion that a familial dynamic should contain but only one “breadwinner”, through their taxation regime.

“The marriage penalty” is an additional liability incurred by those couples who are married and their overall tax bill has increased due to filing their taxes jointly (Tax Foundation, 2024). It has been found that the consequence of this marriage penalty is harshest on women with familial obligations, as over a lifetime low-income women

with children fare better financially when single rather than married (*Pendered, 2024*). This matter is only worsened by the fact that it has been demonstrated that mothers are generally found to have lower wages than childless women (*Anderson, Binder & Krause, 2002*), in a phenomenon known as “The Motherhood Wage Penalty”, in which mothers can see their salaries drop by as much as 5% per child compared to those without children (*N26, 2022*).

2.3 The Problem of Promotion for Working Mothers

A study conducted in Ireland of over 2,000 employees found that 56% of working mothers believe that they have been blocked for promotion (*BusinessPlus, 2023*).

The inconsideration given to female employees once they enter motherhood is so repetitive in our society that it has even been granted its own name, “*The Mummy Track*”. This refers to the plateauing of career trajectory once a woman gains a caregiving role within her personal life (*Grace Papers, 2023*). This usually manifests itself in the form of her job losing some responsibilities, being overlooked for interesting projects, or assumptions being made, without consulting her, about what she is willing and not willing to do when it comes to working extra hours (*Baggs, 2014*). In essence, women with familial commitments aren’t provided the opportunity to progress forward, because the conditions in her workplace environment are essentially trying to support her regression.

Female employees are less likely to be promoted than their male counterparts, despite outperforming them and being less likely to quit (*Somers, 2022*). That being said, the gender promotional disparity demonstrated in the professional world is even more considerable when a caregiving role is added to the equation with childless women being 8.2 times more likely to be recommended for a promotion than mothers (*White, 2024*).

3. The Issue of Maternity Leave

Around 50 countries around the world provide paid maternity for more than 6 months by law (*Hernandez, 2018*). Meanwhile, there are still women in 7 countries around the

world, left without the vital right to earn a living wage in the weeks after giving birth, with the highly industrialised nation of the United States being included in this mix, leaving 75.54 million women in employment in the US in 2023 without this basic right (*Statista, 2023*).

The legislation connected to maternity leave, established paternity leave policies and the attitudes surrounding maternity leave, are all contributors to the treatment experienced by women in the professional world, who find themselves with a newfound or increased caregiving role within their personal lives, both before, during and after maternity leave, and in some cases are the basis for their exit from the professional world.

3.1 The shortcomings of employment law and its impact on working mothers

0 weeks *paid* maternity leave in the U.S. is the nationwide maternity policy that exists there. Should any woman become pregnant in America, no federal law provides a right to paid maternity leave to ensure these women have finances to support themselves during a time in which financial stability is of paramount importance. A country that prides itself on its progressiveness, with more than half of Americans declaring that America is “one of the greatest countries in the world” (*Hartig, 2023*), leaves 50.5% of its population in an unacceptable employment situation (*Statistics Times, 2023*).

Globally, there are countries in which legislation grants maternity leave, but does not mandate paternity leave, which plainly signals that women should act as the primary caregiver in society. This scenario is the case in India, and the careers of all women with caregiving commitments in India are being adversely affected by this, with less than 1 in 5 women who take maternity leave in India returning to work for the same company (*Sharma, 2022*). Women are subsequently viewed as less preferred employees in the country with only 1 in 10 women being a part of the country’s workforce, while 2 in 3 Indian men are currently in employment, further pushing the narrative that a woman’s primary vocation in society should be “caregiver”.

3.2 Paternity Policy

In the UK, a new mother can take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave (*Government Digital Service, 2012*). The paternity leave policy dictates that new fathers in employment can take up to 1 or 2 weeks to help care for their newborn (*Government Digital Service, 2013*). This is not even 2% of the time that women are given and this lopsided policy effectively appoints women as the primary caregivers from the outset (*Darbyshire, 2023*). These policies pave the way for the unequal caregiving distribution that is to follow. They reiterate that mothers should place their careers on hold and hinder their career advancement, while fathers can promptly get back to work.

A study conducted found that when substantial paternity leave is given, a positive relationship between exposure to paternity leave and mother's employment rates was seen. Sweden, a country with one of the highest levels of paternity leave uptake in the world (*Savage, 2024*), is also home to one of the highest female employment figures in the EU, with close to 80% in 2016 (*European Commission, 2016*).

Further to this, a study conducted on data from a European Union Labour Force Survey found that mothers' employment rates were seen to have increased by 17% in the long run (*Bacheron, 2021*) when substantial paternity leave is provided. Bacheron stated that he found a greater impact on women than on men, suggesting that paternity leave policies have contributed to weakening the gender inequalities and discriminatory treatment of women with caregiving responsibilities in the workforce.

3.3 The treatment of new mothers succeeding maternity leave

For those women with family commitments who do retain their employment, the discrimination faced does not simply conclude after their maternity leave period is over. They may return to a job faced with "pay cuts, demotion and hostile treatment", as reported by the EOC (*UPI, 2004*). In 2015, it was even reported that women returning from maternity leave were *more* likely to face discrimination in the workplace than they were a decade prior. The report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission also found that 10% of new mothers were discouraged by their employers

to attend antenatal appointments, putting both their and their baby's health at risk (*Topping, 2015*).

A report by the British Government in 2016 revealed that 3 out of 4 mothers said they had a negative or possibly discriminatory experience either prior to maternity leave, on maternity leave and/or on return to work from maternity leave. If that statistic is scaled up to the UK population, this means 390,000 women a year are subjected to discrimination because of their caregiving commitments (*Adams et al., 2016*)

3.4 When maternity leave means leaving the professional world completely

Discrimination against women seeking leave to care for their newborn child or children even stems beyond the issue of an insufficient amount of time of paid maternity leave, it actually leaves some women jobless.

This issue is not just confined to the US and developing countries, it is seen on a global scale for example in places like Europe, with the EOC reporting in a study they conducted that 7% of working women were either dismissed, made redundant or left their jobs due to pregnancy discrimination (*Parker, 2005*).

On top of the discrimination experienced, research conducted on over 1,500 women demonstrated that the “absence of explicit support” continues to be the biggest reason why women cannot continue in the professional world post-maternity (*OfExperiences, 2023*). Working mothers feel that the caregiving burden imparted upon them after maternity leave is too substantial to return to their prior status in the professional world. A survey conducted suggested that while 98 percent of women want to return to work after maternity leave, only 13 per cent say it's actually viable (*Franklin, 2023*).

“Opt out” or “pushed out”? was a question asked by a 2019 survey in which women returning to employment after having children are leaving the workforce, not in a self-serving manner, but because of “pushed out factors” such as workplace inflexibility, long working hours and a high volume of work, to name a few (*Lim & Mohd Rasdi, 2019*).

Conclusions

“Working mothers are often expected to work like they don’t have children and raise children as if they don’t work” (Savat-Wustl, 2021).

The objective of this literature review was to gain an insight into the lives, experiences and challenges faced by those women in society who hold a place in the working world while simultaneously acting as a caregiver in their personal lives.

Working women in our society with caregiving obligations in their personal lives are a working demographic that is marginalised and overlooked in comparison with their childless professional counterparts. The Fawcett Society has estimated that almost a quarter of a million working mothers in Britain have left their jobs that have “outdated and toxic attitudes around motherhood”, as well as due to the pressures of childcare (Royle, 2023).

This literature review illustrates that the professional world is losing out on competent and qualified employees as a consequence of the negative and often discriminatory treatment of working mothers that is being implemented, with a study showing that 1 in 5 women have left their employment after a negative or discriminatory experience (Cave, 2023). The reluctance of the professional world to acknowledge the changing needs of those in society with commitments outside of the office, in particular women, by embracing new ways of doing business, such as flexible working hours and remote working, is leaving these women with no option but to hinder their professional development and potential.

The unwillingness of the professional world to change the way it operates without the acknowledgement that women are the primary caregivers of the world, but also valuable and skilled employees, is further enabling the narrative to continue that a woman’s place is in the home and that males should continue to act as the “breadwinner” of the family when in actuality, a study conducted by the University of Connecticut has shown that husbands who have wives who out earn them are happier than those who don’t (Strauss, 2016).

The shortcomings of the approach in place in the professional world to foster and advance working mothers thus far have been highlighted in this examination of literature. It is therefore important in future to implement professional policies with working mothers included in the equation, not evaded. The findings of this literature review, alongside the lines of inquiry which I will pursue during the course of the research which I will undertake, will provide insights for those in the professional world who must move towards newfound ways of carrying out their business in order to protect and progress women in the professional world with caregiving responsibilities in their personal lives.

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology utilised for the investigation into an exploration of the treatment experienced by working mothers in the professional world as a result of their caregiving commitments, and the perspectives held about the world of work by this demographic. Instead of being met with acceptance, they are faced with discrimination and barriers that impede their professional aspirations and development.

The research plan, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis and methods are the primary components of this chapter (*Laala, 2020*).

Methodology Selected

To conduct this research, I have utilised both qualitative and quantitative research methods. I have chosen this approach to ensure that the scope of my research is thorough and representative of the experiences had by this demographic in the professional world.

Furthermore, upon analysing the research that currently exists relating to this subject, I have observed that there is quite an equal distribution of qualitative and quantitative

research catalogued. Therefore, I chose to conduct a research methodology pertinent to this field.

Qualitative research

A qualitative study is appropriate when the goal of research is to explain a phenomenon by relying on the perception of a person's experience in a given situation (*Stake, 2010*). A qualitative research method was included in my research to allow me to gain an in-depth and more personal insight into not just the experiences and barriers perceived by these working mothers, but also the reasons as to why they think these types of situations occurred and continue to occur in the professional world. 7 women were interviewed to create a holistic picture of the conduct of the professional world with respect to working mothers and to catalogue any advancements that have been made to date. The women also divulged recommendations and proposals of their own which they feel would create a more accommodating and adaptable professional world for women with significant personal duties.

This research is exploratory in nature as it attempts to explore the experiences of working mothers who engage with the professional world ("*Chapter 3 Methodology, n.d.*"). I have utilised a phenomenological qualitative technique to realise my research objectives. Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world (*Neubauer et al., 2019*), in this context, within the professional world. A phenomenological approach facilitates research data of an exploratory and descriptive approach, which is what I hoped to derive from the in-depth interviews conducted (*Umanilo, 2019*). By using this research methodology, I strove to analyse the beliefs, feelings and perceptions held by this demographic about their interaction with the professional world (*Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023*).

I have focused my qualitative research on the experiences of women in Ireland who act in a caregiving/maternal role and who are currently in employment or had previously been in employment but had to resign due to familial commitments. Prior to carrying out each interview, all of the participants gave their verbal consent for all information

that they disclosed during the course of the interview to be analysed, interpreted and published.

Study Participants

The sample was drawn from a population of women who have a varying number of children, and which are all of varying age. Each of the women have worked in the professional world at some point in their lives, or are still currently engaging in it. Participants were sourced through pre-existing social networks. A large portion of the participants had experienced maternity leave either once or multiple times throughout their career. These women could be working full- or part time and there was no age limitation. The women were or are employed in varied sectors. Career examples included, but were not limited to, health care, self-employment, family business participation, service industry etc.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative element of my research was realised by completing online interviews. The in-depth interviews consisted of 10 open-ended questions which allowed the participant to choose what to share and in how much detail. This enabled the focus to be on the interviewee's perceptions, beliefs and experiences regarding their involvement in the professional world as a woman with caregiving responsibilities (*AmberScript, 2023*). The nature of the questions began rather simply and then intensified as the interview progressed. The interviews were recorded using the Zoom meeting platform. Each participant's interview occurred during a single interview session. After the interview had been completed, I reached out to the participant to ask if there were any other thoughts or insights that they would like to add upon reflection.

Memos were used to capture any research perceptions during and after each interview (*"Chapter III: Method," n.d.*). Memo writing helps minimise bias, because the activity is reflective, which aids objectivity throughout the study (*Birks & Mills, 2015*).

Quantitative Research

The quantitative research that was conducted incorporates data from survey participants of various nationalities to gain a cross-cultural perspective on the experiences and barriers perceived in achieving professional contentment and advancement by the demographic group of working mothers. I chose to include quantitative research in addition to qualitative research to create a greater dataset to mitigate any biases that could have arisen from solely relying on a small cohort of qualitative interviews.

A quantitative approach is appropriate when a researcher seeks to understand the relationship between variables (*Clark et al., 2003*). Therefore, I employed a correlational research design in the form of a questionnaire to gather quantitative data on the participating sample of the demographic of women with caregiving commitments who currently belong to the professional world, or have belonged to the professional world previously. This type of non-experimental research shows the correlation between two variables, i.e. the extent to which one factor causes changes in another factor (*Privitera, 2022*). In the case the first factor being employment and how the second factor, caregiving/childcare responsibilities changes the factor of employment, with the research demographic being confined to women with children.

Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative portion of my research was obtained through conducting an online survey using Microsoft Forms, in which the questions were not mandatory. I designed the survey in such a way to eliminate a response bias, in which the participant may respond to required questions but may be randomly selecting an answer to comply with social norms, to answer in the way in which they assume that the interviewer expects them to answer, or because they are uncomfortable reporting their honest answer, which I felt was a possibility giving the somewhat sensitive nature of the survey (*Bogner & Landrock, 2016*).

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data involves interpretation and an attempt in understanding the subjects' world "...as they construct it" (*Jones, 1985*)

Following qualitative data collection, "the events recorded must be processed and categorised systematically in order to draw conclusions from the data (*Keeves, 1990*).

All interviews were conducted in English. The identity of the participants was removed from the transcripts to maintain their confidentiality and pseudonyms were assigned. On several occasions, I re-listened to the recordings so as to be able to draw any conclusions from the perceptions held by an interviewee. Any recurring themes and patterns were then recognised upon reviewing the information obtained. During the qualitative interviews I adopted the approach undertaken by Stake (1995) which outlines:

"I do not seek to describe the world or even to describe fully the case. I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case by listening as closely as I can and by thinking about it as deeply as I can (pp. 76-77)."

At all times during the analysis of the qualitative data, I remained acutely aware that it is possible to produce partial and biased analyses (*Eilis, 2012*).

Quantitative Data Analysis

The goal of a quantitative data analysis is to reveal the underlying patterns, trends and relationships of a study's context (*Albers, 2017*). The results of 208 questionnaires were computed. A filter question was utilised in the first section of the questionnaire to ensure that the respondent fitted the characteristics required by the survey, which was "Do you have children". Any survey in which the participant recorded an answer of "No", the survey was disregarded and the responses were not included in the data analysis process. Data gathered through the questionnaire was subjected to frequency counts. In other words, the participants' responses for each individual question were added together to find the highest frequency of occurrence (i.e. the number of times that a particular response occurs) (*Kenenisa, 2021*)

The criteria of reliability, validity and generalisability were used to gauge the quality of this quantitative research ("*Chapter 5: Methodology,*" *n.d.*).

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative Ethical Considerations

The purpose of this study was explained to the qualitative research participants verbally and they were informed that they were not obliged to participate and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative consequences. The ethical procedure adopted for this research project is heavily based upon the approach taken by Bassey (1999) who upholds respect for democracy, respect for truth, and respect for persons. Trustworthiness is “significant” he states and researchers must “be truthful in data collection, analysis and the reporting of findings” (p.74), a position that was strongly exercised throughout this research process.

Quantitative Ethical Considerations

A specific purpose built approach, as noted by Zyphur (2017), was utilised to prepare and realise this quantitative research. This meaning that, “it is specific purposes that should drive the production and use of quantitative research, not ready-made formulas applied without attention to purposes and relations”. This approach to research underpinned the methodology utilised to fulfil the predetermined objectives of this study.

This quantitative research was conducted under the adherence of the ESOMAR International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research, and Data Analytics (Esomar, 2016), which acts as a baseline of international standards for data-driven projects. In accordance with this code of practice and the fundamental principles outlined in the guidances, a preface to the quantitative survey was included. This preface informed the research participants of the essence of the study, the purpose of the research, as well as providing a statement regarding the confidential nature in which their responses would be collected and analysed. Furthermore in agreement with ESOMAR’s International Code, all questions throughout the survey were voluntary, meaning that the participant could chose the amount of information they were willing to disclose, keeping in line with specifications on primary data collection;

“Researchers must ensure that participation is voluntary and based on information about the general purpose and nature of the research that is adequate and not misleading”.

Results

This chapter contains the results of the 7 qualitative interviews as well as the 208 survey responses received to facilitate the answering of the predetermined research objectives

Qualitative Results

It is evident from the 7 interviews conducted that the way in which the professional world has operated and continues to operate in the past often neglects to take into consideration that women are the primary caregiver. As a result of their caregiving role, it has been recounted in all of the interviews carried out that their career can often be hindered and professional barriers can ensue. This research has emphasised that women in employment with familial responsibilities should be afforded more support to manage this, rather than the additional barriers, bias and bigotry that they seem to be met with.

All of the interviewees discussed how they had left their paid employment at least once in their professional life in order to achieve their caregiving commitments, all at varying points within their career, with several of them not returning to the workforce until their children were at a high school age, citing their caregiving commitments as the primary reason for this.

All of the participants of the qualitative interviews also emphasised circumstances in which their personal caregiving commitments superseded their professional commitments, noting that when their children fell ill, this meant the prioritisation of their family commitments, often to the detriment of their professional obligations, with Interviewee D noting that *“when your at work and your child is sick, you’re in work but your brain isn’t necessarily there it is with your child”*. Interviewee B also provided details as to when the children were sick, the expectation was that she would be the responsible party for taking care of them during this time, not her male significant other.

Interviewee C and E, noted the inability of working mothers to work overtime and how this can give rise to hindering their professional development, with Interviewee G, who had previously worked within the STEM industry, a traditionally male dominated industry, described the *“pressure to always be there and not take time off”*, noting how

additionally that her male colleagues had the “*freedom to spend more time at work*” than the female employees, and in turn “*receiving better projects because of it*”.

Almost all of the interviewees noted that paternity leave was insufficient in comparison to the maternity leave offered within Ireland, with Interviewee D noting also that there is “*no incentive*” for male employees to take this parental leave also, which as Interviewee A also illustrates the “*thought process behind men’s role in raising children*”.

The qualitative interviews also highlighted discriminations and questions that they were subjected to within their careers as a result of their gender, and as a result their primary caregiving role . Interviewee B, reported during her time spent in the workforce that she feels as though she was suffered pay discrimination, while Interviewee G describing one of her hiring process experiences in which she was asked about “*how I would manage with childcare*”, in which afterwards she expressed how she “*doesn’t think that a man would be asked the same question*”.

The results of the qualitative interviews have most notably shed light on the structural inadequacies of workplace policies, which do not succeed in recognising the dual responsibilities that working mothers have, and the strain that this can place on their professional lives and aspirations. Further to this, the interviews highlighted a trend of career stagnation arising from career breaks, career changes or leaving the professional world entirely for prolonged periods of time. These women have illustrated that due to the pressure of the caregiving commitments bestowed upon them, their professional aspirations had to be sacrificed at one point of time, or in some cases even several, while their male partners continued on their career path unencumbered, despite the changing caregiving circumstances.

Quantitative Results

A total of 208 people participated in the quantitative survey. A filter question was utilised in the first section of the questionnaire to ensure that the respondent fitted the characteristics required by the survey to only encapsulate the experiences of working

mothers, which was “Do you have children”. This resulted in 177 “Yes” responses, and it was from these 177 responses that the results were derived.

The first section of the survey aimed to gather data on the demographics of the research population. Out of the 177 survey participants, 158 were Irish, 3 were British, 1 was American, 1 was Brazilian, 1 was German, 1 was Hungarian and 12 did not record a nationality. The age group distribution of the participants was as follows; 9.6% were aged between 25-34, 22.6% were between the age of 35-44, 40.68% of the participants were between 45-54, 20.34% were aged 55-64, 5.65% belonged to the 65+ age category and 2 of the participants did not record their age.

All of the survey participants also had spent varying amounts of time in paid employment, and they also held different levels of education. 66.67% of those surveyed had been working within the professional world for 20+ years, 12.43% had been in paid employment for 16-20 years, 14.12% of the mothers surveyed had worked for 8-15 years, 5.08% had been employed for 4-7 years and 1.13% for 1-3 years. Meanwhile, 1 respondent had acquired a Doctorate/PhD, 44 held a Master's degree, 65 obtained a Bachelor's degree and 67 had completed a High School level of education.

By examining various cross tables, the opinions and experiences held by varying demographics of the research participants can be analysed. Maternity Leave (Figure 1) and Paternity Leave Satisfaction (Figure 2) by Age Group was determined. It was discovered that the age cohort of 35-44 held the most criticism towards the maternity policy in their country, while the age group of 25-34 year olds disagreed the most with the paternity policy of their country.

Age	Total Respondents Per Age Category	Percentage of Respondents who AGREE that the Maternity Policy in their country is sufficient/enough	Percentage of Respondents who DISAGREE the Maternity Policy in their country is sufficient/enough	Percentage of Respondents who PREFER NOT TO SAY if the Maternity Policy in their country is sufficient/enough
25-34	17	41.2%	58.8%	-
35-44	40	30.0%	67.5%	2.5%
45-54	72	54.2%	45.8%	-
55-64	36	47.2%	50.0%	2.8%
65+	10	50.0%	50.0%	-
Unknown	2	100.0%	0.0%	-
TOTAL	177	46.3%	52.5%	1.1%

Figure 1: Maternity Leave Satisfaction by Age Group

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

Age	Total Respondents Per Age Category	Percentage of Respondents who AGREE that the Paternity Policy in their country is sufficient/enough	Percentage of Respondents who DISAGREE the Paternity Policy in their country is sufficient/enough	Percentage of Respondents who PREFER NOT TO SAY if the Paternity Policy in their country is sufficient/enough
25-34	17	12%	88%	-
35-44	40	23%	75%	2.5%
45-54	72	44.4%	52.8%	1.4%
55-64	36	38.9%	58.3%	2.8%
65+	10	50%	40%	10%
Unknown	2	100%	0%	0.0%
TOTAL	177	36%	61%	2.3%

Figure 2: Paternity Leave Satisfaction by Age Group

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

By examining the cross sectional data between the amount of years spent in employment and the discrimination experienced by the research respondents, both in the context of being a woman (Figure 3) and being a mother (Figure 4), a correlation was found that if the women operated within the working world for a longer time period, their chances of experiencing discrimination also increased. The data of the respondents that recorded 1-3 years of time spent in paid employment are not included in this evaluation as the response group is too small to draw conclusive insights on this research demographic.

Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment	Total Respondents Per Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment	Percentage of Respondents who HAVE felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of their previous or current employments because of being a woman	Percentage of Respondents who HAVE NOT felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of their previous or current employments because of being a woman	Percentage of Respondents who PREFER NOT TO SAY if they have felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of their previous or current employments because of being a woman
1-3 years	2	50%	50%	-
4-7 years	10	40%	60%	-
8-15 years	25	24%	72%	4%
16-20 years	22	27%	68.2%	4.5%
20+ years	118	37.3%	62.7%	-
TOTAL	177	34.5%	64.4%	1.1%

Figure 3: Experience with Workplace Discrimination as a Women by Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment	Total Respondents Per Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment	Percentage of Respondents who HAVE felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of their previous or current employments because of being a mother	Percentage of Respondents who HAVE NOT felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of their previous or current employments because of being a mother	Percentage of Respondents who PREFER NOT TO SAY if they have felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of their previous or current employments because of being a mother
1-3 years	2	50%	50%	-
4-7 years	10	30%	70%	-
8-15 years	25	32%	68%	-
16-20 years	22	31.8%	63.6%	4.5%
20+ years	118	43.22%	55.9%	0.8%
TOTAL	177	39.5%	59.3%	1.1%

Figure 4: Experience with Workplace Discrimination as a Mother by Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

The descriptive statistics of the survey respondents have also been evaluated (Figure 5), accounting for the most numerous characteristics recorded during the study. The mode nationality of the participants was Irish, while the most number of respondents were in the age bracket of 45-54. The mode of the question regarding the amount of years spent in paid employment of those surveyed was 20+ years, while the most populous answer to the query regarding the level of education achieved was Secondary School/High School (67 respondents), closely followed by a Bachelor’s degree (65 respondents)

	Mode	Total Number of Respondents
Nationality	Irish	158
Age	45-54 years	72
Amount of Years Spent in Paid Employment	20+ years	118
Level of Education Achieved	Secondary School/ High School	67

Figure 5: Descriptive statistics of survey respondents data

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

From the descriptive statistics, profiles of the respondents to the quantitative survey can be derived and analysed in order to further comprehend their experiences and perspectives in the professional world, and in turn set about generating discussions and recommendations to help not hinder these specific peoples with their professional capacities in the workplace, while also acknowledging their personal commitments.

One of the profiles that has arisen from the quantitative research is that of a Highly Experienced Working Mother (20+ years in the professional world). This demographic has experienced greater exposure to discrimination, compared to other working mothers who have spent less time within paid employment. However, it must be noted that they actually experience greater satisfaction with maternity leave, and even paternity leave policies than the other younger working mothers surveyed. The top ranked family friendly policy among this age category was a 4 day work week with a mean value of 4.69 (Figure 6).

Amount of Years	4 day work w	Working fr	Paid childcare in	Flexible Work	Longer/Obligatc
20+ years	5	3	5	5	5
20+ years	4	4	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	3
20+ years	5	1	5	4	5
20+ years	4	5	5	5	4
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	2	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	5
20+ years	5	3	5	5	5
20+ years	5	5	5	5	4
MEAN	4.69	3.88	4.42	4.62	4.18

Figure 6: Mean Value of Family Friendly Policies for Cohort of Respondents with 20+ Years Spent in Paid Employment

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

Another profile which has been attained through the research survey is that of a Younger Working Mother (25-34 years old). This profile is of Irish origin. As well, this cohort of respondents were found to be less satisfied with maternity leave policies than the older respondents, and even less satisfied with the current paternity policies in operation. The most favoured family friendly policy among this demographic was Longer/Obligatory Paternity Leave with a mean value of 4.82 (Figure 7). The outcome that having a more extensive paternity leave policy was the most instrumental family friendly police for this profile is in agreement with prior research also, in which it was noted that “Millenials” value parental leave more than earlier generations, so much so

that 83 percent of American millennials outlined in a survey of 9,700 people said that they would be more likely to join a company offering such benefits (Alsop, 2017) .

Age	4 day work	Working fr	Paid childcare i	Flexible Work	Longer/Obligat
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	4	5
25-34	5	3	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	3	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	1	1	1	1	4
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	3	5	5	4
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	5	3	5	5	5
25-34	5	5	5	5	5
25-34	4	4	4	4	5
25-34	3	1	2	5	4
MEAN	4.59	4.00	4.53	4.65	4.82

Figure 7: Mean Value of Family Friendly Policies for Age Category 25-34 Years Old

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

The objective of the second section of the survey was to gauge the opinions, experiences and perspectives that the survey respondents had regarding their time and treatment within the professional world. The second section of the survey followed a dichotomous survey scale, meaning participants were asked a series of simple yes or no questions in order to facilitate ease of completion and ensure uncomplicated and clear responses to the questions being asked (Sharma, 2023). The responses outlined that almost half of participants were unhappy with the maternity policy within their country, with an even greater percentage indicating that the paternity policy is insufficient (See Figure 8). A large majority of participants also demonstrated through their responses, the professional sacrifice that accompanies being the primary care provider of their familial situation. Participants were also questioned on whether or not they feel they take on more caregiving commitments than their male significant other, as well as whether or not they had to change their employment status (beside maternity leave), to fulfil these same caregiving commitments, with a startling majority of nearly 7 in 10 saying that they had. Finally, the women surveyed were also asked about their experiences with discrimination in the workplace, first in the context of being a women, and secondly in the context of being a mother, with greater percentage reporting less

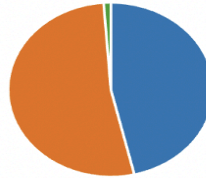
favourable treatment as a result of being a mother, than just being a woman (See Figure 9).

7. Do you feel that the maternity leave policy in your country is sufficient/enough

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	82
No	93
Prefer not to say	2



8. Do you feel that the paternity leave policy in your country is sufficient/enough

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	64
No	108
Prefer not to say	4

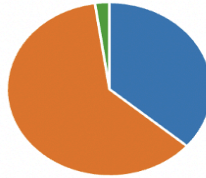


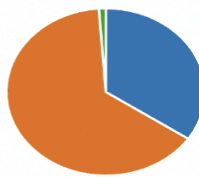
Figure 8: The opinions of working mothers on the sufficiency of maternity leave and paternity leave policies

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

12. Have you ever felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of your previous or current employments because of being a woman?

[More Details](#)

Yes	61
No	114
Prefer not to say	2



13. Have you ever felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of your previous or current employments because of being a mother?

[More Details](#)

Yes	70
No	105
Prefer not to say	2

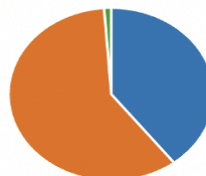


Figure 9: The experiences with workplace discrimination & favouritism had by working mothers

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

The third section featured a variety of policies that could be interpreted as policies that are family friendly work policies or policies that would afford greater professional flexibility for working mothers. These policies were chosen through the analysis of the literature, as well as a result of the views expressed by the interviewees during the qualitative interviews that were conducted prior to the survey (See Figure 10).

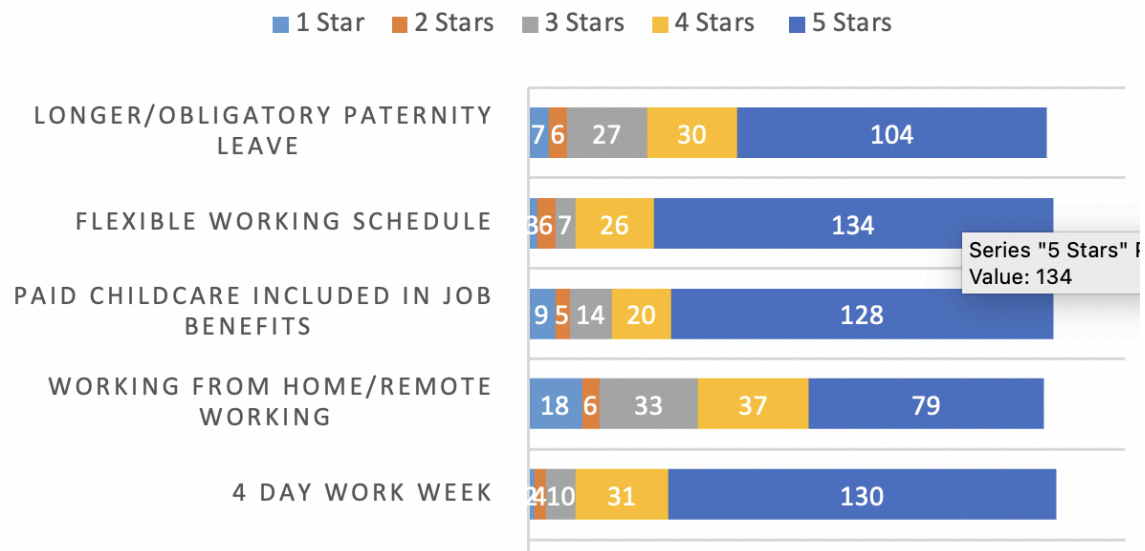


Figure 10: How helpful working mothers perceive various family friendly policies would be in balancing their professional and caregiving commitments

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

In the final section of the survey, the participants were presented with a number of statements related to the current organisation in which they are employed, in order to illustrate the impact that an organisation’s culture has on a working mother’s professional contentment and development. The line of inquiry in this section posed questions of a similar nature to recommended sample engagement studies for this demographic that I obtained through prior research of the topic (*Kugler, 2015*). The responses varied quite largely in nature, meaning that the overall weighted scales presented generally neutral answers (see Figure 11) in terms of their organisation’s approach to flexibility, supportiveness and their ability to give working mother’s the work-life balance they require. This information would suggest that while some organisations are dynamic and aware of their obligation to protect and promote working women with family commitments in their organisation, the contrary is evident within

other organisations. This illustrates the need for policies that must be enacted by the entirety of the professional world to ensure equal opportunities for all working mothers within the world of work, regardless of their industry, organisation or role.

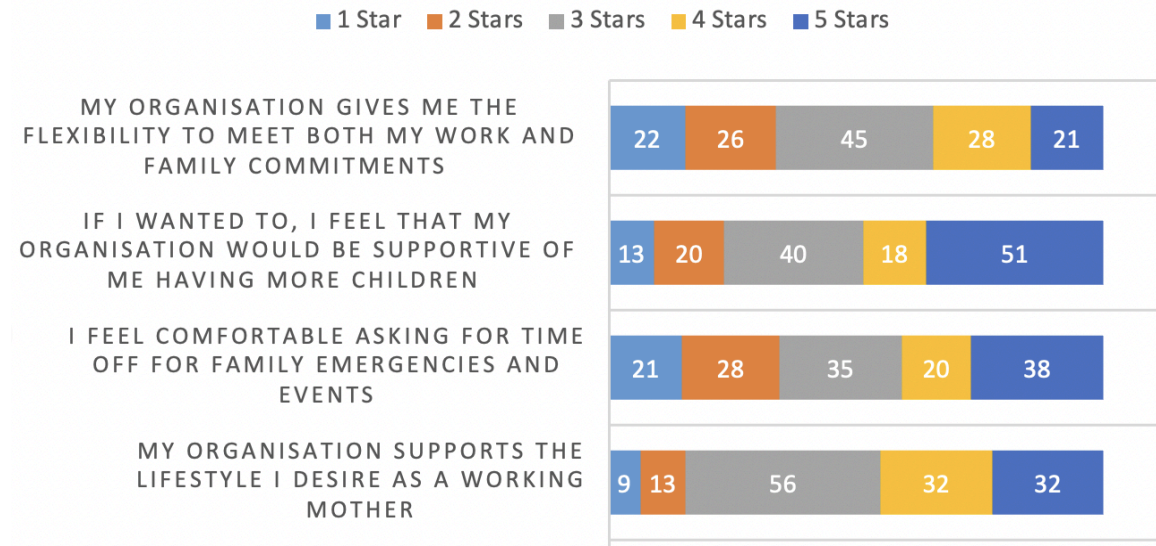


Figure 11: The opinions of working mothers on their current organisation towards issues that arise as a result of working mother’s caregiving commitments

Source: Survey data conducted for this thesis study, 2024

Discussions/Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to examine the way in which the professional world operates without the acknowledgement that women are the primary caregivers of the world. This chapter will feature a discussion of the major findings that arose during the qualitative and quantitative research that was conducted, as well as in the existing literature on the topic. This chapter will also explore recommendations for employers and those directly related to the professional world, to curtail the matters which were highlighted throughout the research process.

Interpretation of the Findings

Although the areas in which the women work or worked within the professional world varied, along with the length of time that they spent within the professional world, the sentiments expressed about the experiences that arose for them within their professional

career due to their changing familial circumstances mostly assumed the same format. However, it must be noted that these experiences did not just pertain to certain industries, and it was highlighted during a qualitative interview process that in terms of professional development and promotion, the odds are never in the favour of those women with familial commitments, even in what is deemed a female-dominated industry, with Interviewee D noting that, it was mainly “*males that adopted managerial positions and that only female nurses went part-time, participating in job sharing, even though the male nurses in managerial positions also had children*”.

1. Gender Disparity in Caregiving Commitments and its Influence on a Mother's Participation in the Professional World

As previously indicated by the literature, it is considered that the woman's place is considered to be at home, even in this “progressive” day and age. A study conducted by the European Commission revealed that 44% of EU residents believe that the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family (*European Commission, 2021*). This is concurrent with the perceptions outlined within the interviews, with Interviewee A of the qualitative research indicating during her interview that while she was in the workplace after returning from maternity leave, she would always be asked if her husband was “*babysitting*” their child. The official definition of babysitting is “the work of taking care of someone's baby or child while that person is out”. In this case, it should not be considered 'babysitting', but simply the father caring for their own child. Conversely, her husband was never asked this question as it was immediately assumed that, during the working day, the mother was at home fulfilling the caregiving responsibilities of their family, even well after the maternity leave period had ended, and that she was not back engaging in the professional world.

The results of the survey would agree with the literature regarding the inequality that exists between the caregiving commitments shared between working mothers and fathers.

A caregiving commitment gender disparity between mothers and their male significant others, was found to be present across all age demographics within the survey. A startling 89% of mothers surveyed stated that they consider themselves to have more

caregiving/family responsibilities than their male significant other. It is this societal set of circumstances which in turn could explain why the gender employment gap within the European Union, is highest between married men and women with children, with the gender gap in the share of unemployed people at its widest at women's prime childbearing age group of 30-44 (*European Commission, 2021*).

2. Professional World Gender Disparities are Contributed to by Maternity & Paternity Leave Disparities

In 2014, 41% of mothers of children under four were employed full-time, compared to 82% of childless women and 84% of fathers (*Women's Budget Group, 2016*). This sex disparity is partly due to societal expectations (enshrined in law via unequal maternity and paternity leave allowances) that the mother be the primary caregiver.

The sentiments expressed in the literature are thoroughly in agreement with the opinions obtained in the quantitative survey data. Although dissatisfaction was expressed within the survey results for the insufficiency of the maternity leave policy, with 53% of the demographic surveyed saying that it was insufficient, the expression of discontent in terms of the paternity leave policy was even greater, with over 6 in 10 surveyed (61%) disclosing that the paternity leave policy in effect in their country is inadequate.

The implementation of a substantial paternity leave policy in a country would mean that women are no longer viewed as the main party responsible for accomplishing familial obligations, and reduces the narrative that women are professionally less productive as a result of their personal commitments and that they should be expected to defer their professional development as a result of their caregiving commitments, to a greater extent than their male partner.

Enacting both an obligatory and lengthier paternity leave policy would also work to reduce the impact of the phenomenon of the "Motherhood Penalty", which sees working mothers experiencing a 60% drop in earnings compared to fathers in the decade following the birth of their first child (*PwC, 2023*). This has already been illustrated in Nordic countries. In a 2010 Swedish study, it was found that a mother's future earnings

increased almost 7% for every month of leave taken by the father (*Lindström, 2010*). These statistics demonstrate the current uncoordinated nature and differentiation that exists between countries within the European Union in terms of paternity leave. In Ireland, the maximum paternity leave that father's are "entitled to" is 2 weeks, however, this is not even mandatory and men in Ireland's professional sector can forgo this time away from work, as it was reported that almost *half* of all fathers in the country do not take parental leave (*Loughlin, 2020*).

By recognising the disproportionality that exists between paternity leave and maternity leave, the professional world can relinquish the outdated notion that a woman's professional development should be halted as a result of caregiving commitments, which has allowed fathers in the professional world to continue on with minimal interruption to their professional endeavours, in turn would heighten the freedoms women with familial commitments have to climb the career ladder and prosper in their professional capacity

3. Mother's Earnings Gap

To put it quite simply, having a child is bad for a woman's earnings and professional development (*Cook, 2024*). This is not only in the immediate period after birth but across her lifetime, an 18 year old woman entering the workforce today will not see equal pay within her working lifetime (*PwC, 2023*).

The literature is in agreement with the survey results in this regard, as almost 8 in 10 women surveyed (76%) stated that if they did not have children/caregiving commitments, that they/would make more money within their career/would have achieved more within their career. The findings of the research highlight the monetary disparity that women, more specifically women with familial commitments are exposed to within the professional world and the impact that motherhood has on the earnings and professional trajectory of their career.

This economic disparity can also be attributed to the fact that working mothers are almost forced to reduce their workplace participation from full time to part time, or even

leave the paid workforce completely, because of the inability to in essence, have two full time jobs, their paid employment position, and their position as a full time mother/caregiver as a study found that working mothers clock an average of 98 hours per week carrying out unpaid caregiving commitments (Petter, 2018). This reality was also reflected in the quantitative data, in which 69% of respondents stated “that they had to change their employment status (besides maternity leave) because of your family/caregiving commitments (e.g. move to part-time, leave your job)”.

4. From Recruitment to Advancement, how Working Mothers are Disadvantaged

Historically, the perception is held that workplace policies and the professional world hold gender biases, which has been demonstrated effectively throughout history through the infamous gender pay gap that exists within our society, as well as the varying treatment experienced by the different genders within a working environment. However, as has been supported by the literature, the occurrence of bias becomes enlarged when children and caregiving commitments are included in the equation.

This reality was expressed through the results of the quantitative survey. While 34% of the 177 working mothers interviewed recorded that they “felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of your previous or current employments because of being a woman”, this percentage was enlarged when they were asked if they had “felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of your previous or current employments because of being a mother?”, with 4 in 10 women reporting that they had. The occurrence of feeling “less favoured/discriminated against” in a work environment has negative implications for the career development of these working mothers as these can lead to feelings of discouragement and inadequacy within a professional setting, with 27% of working women claiming that they are not confident enough to highlight their own achievements, and in turn creating a situation in which they can be passed over for promotion (Copeland, 2023).

As described earlier in this research paper and highlighted during interview B, the “Marriage Bar” was a law that required Irish women to resign from their employment once married, and as a result gaining a caregiver or maternal role (Feenane, 2022). This

meant that married women were viewed to inevitably have children and take on the primary caregiving role of the household, rendering them completely excluded from the professional world and destroying any professional aspirations they once held.

The demonstration of the still unequal reality of the professional world accompanies both the findings of this research as well as countless others. In a set of two experimental studies conducted, the subtle discrimination of non-pregnant working mothers in the hiring process was examined. Evidence of discriminatory conduct was found, with mothers receiving more negativity in callback messages than women without children, men without children, and fathers. They were also rejected more quickly than women without children and fathers (*Cheung et al., 2022*). We would have hoped that as a society, this reluctance to hire working women with familial commitments who are entirely both capable and competent would have disintegrated from the current professional world; however this does not ring true.

Implications for Theory and Research

In order to interpret the experiences and the perceptions held by women within the professional world with caregiving commitments, two closely related theories were utilised as part of this study: Role Theory and Social Role Theory. In this study, each theory was utilised to create a connection between the professional world as a whole, and the working woman with caregiving commitments. Each of these theoretical positions addresses a valuable part of a mother's work and personal life.

1. Role Theory

Role theory refers to the cultural norms regarding psychological interactional aspects of members of society, for the purpose of this study, mothers. Role refers to the social expectations and the social scripts of family roles- how roles have been shaped by cultural conventions and by the collective ideologies of a society (*Georgas, 2004, pp. 11–22*).

Two predominant components of Role Theory in the context of women with caregiving commitments are the concepts of Role Strain and Role Conflict. Although both are

manifested by the un-fulfillment of societal expectations, they differ in nature in the context of working women with familial obligations (Yadav, 2023).

Role strain refers to the stress when, for any number of reasons, an individual cannot meet the demands of their social roles (Goode, 1960). Working women are experiencing difficulty when trying to balance and fulfil their dual roles of carer and employee. Past literature suggests that working mothers are at an increased risk for experiencing role strain compared to other employed adults (LoCascio, 2009). It is a common theme to find working mothers feeling guilty about not being better parents (Tiedje, 2004). This is in agreement with the sentiments expressed during the qualitative interviews, with Interviewee A describing the “*constant guilt*” that accompanies being at work while being a mother.

Role conflict on the other hand, exists when two or more social roles overlap and are incompatible. Conflict occurs because the performance of one role interferes with the performance of another (Creary & Gordon, 2016). Research shows that increased workload, and/or the number of hours spent at work, is closely related to higher levels of role conflict in working mothers (Keith & Schafer, 1980).

This highlights the discord that working women with familial commitments face within the demands of their working lives and also their personal lives. This was also expressed within the qualitative interviews, in which Interviewee C called attention to the fact that “*their commitments at home mean they can work between 8-5 or 9-6 but asking a single mother or a working mother to work overtime is difficult*”. The notion that it is feasible for women to operate flawlessly as both the primary caregiver, and as a fully committed professional is one which is giving rise to strain and conflict experienced by working women, both within their professional and personal lives.

2. Social Role Theory

Eagley’s Social Role Theory (1987) argues that widely shared gender stereotypes develop from the gender division of labour that characterises a society (Ridgeway et al., 2001).

In this context, it is theorised that stereotypes about working mothers will drive biased perceptions about their attitudes toward work and family that will partially account for the “maternal wall” (King, 2008). The maternal wall is simply not just a result of biases enacted upon individual working women within the professional world, it is reinforced through institutional policies and workplace cultures that somewhat dictate the social role working mothers are then forced to play.

These societal expectations were reinforced through historical legislations, which have been examined in the literature, such as the Marriage Bar in Ireland, and even frameworks that still remain in place today, such as the “Marriage Penalty” present within the taxation regime of the United States.

Barriers to career advancement can ensue as a result of the caregiving role that women possess within society, as this employee demographic is viewed to be “less committed” to their jobs due to their familial responsibilities. These sentiments were echoed in the qualitative interviews, with Interviewee F, who now holds a managerial position within her organisation, disclosing how if an employee’s child is sick, or they have a task that they have to fulfil in relation to their caregiving commitments, it is known that that employee may not be as fully committed to their work day as due to their more pressing responsibilities.

The highly disproportionate paternity leave and maternity leave periods given to the workforce, and also subsequent additional parental leaves taken within the course of a child’s life, continue to reinforce the societal caregiving expectations imposed on women and their social role. The elongated time in which women take leave from their employment to fulfil their caregiving responsibilities, in comparison to men, leads to a stereotypical role emergence by both men and women, with women being expected to take on the main responsibilities of the home, while men maintain and expand their careers (O’Connor & Wright, 2013).

Societal expectations and traditional gender norms perpetuate the idea that women should assume the “role” of primary caregiver, and in some cases prioritise it over their professional aspirations and employment role (*Sharma et al., 2016*). This in turn not only impacts individual women, but also perpetuates systemic inequalities within the professional world.

Implications for Practice & Recommendations

The premises upon which the professional world operates is undermining the chances that working mothers have to achieve their full professional potential. How companies treat women embarking on their motherhood journey sets the tone for the rest of their careers and determines if she wants to stay at her job, or even to stay in the workforce (*Perez, 2020*).

If the professional world intends to operate at the highest productivity capacity, it must ensure the inclusion and enrichment of all those that can participate in it, including working mothers, as according to research conducted by KPMG, having more women at work delivers “better returns with lower volatility” (*Morgan, 2023*).

Working mothers add value to the professional world in a multitude of ways. So much so, that 84% of employed Americans believe that having working moms in leadership roles will make a business more successful (*Doolen, 2021*). This study’s conclusion emphasises the need for the professional world to evolve to meet the needs of mothers, rather than women with familial commitments evolving to meet the demands of the professional world.

The results of this study prove that the current way of working within the professional world must be altered to recognise their female employees and the differing needs that they require, compared to the necessities of the workforce of the past. This has been emphasised both in prior research and this research paper. This research has outlined the request and demand for structures in which working women with familial commitments are supported and encouraged, structures such as childcare benefits, flexible working and a 4-day work week.

54% of mothers who do not work outside the home said they would like to “if they could obtain convenient, reliable, and affordable childcare (Young, 2023). One study found that, with consistent childcare, mothers are twice as likely to keep their jobs (Skopeliti, 2023). These sentiments and the findings of this research are in agreement that the issue of childcare should no longer be a woman’s issue, it should be an economic issue (Stengel, 2023). 73% of respondents to the quantitative survey noted that paid childcare being involved in job benefits would be very helpful (5 out of 5 on the scale) in balancing their professional/family commitments. Additionally, Interviewee D reiterated that in the absence of “adequate, appropriate & affordable childcare”, there becomes a continuous “reliance on family members, in particular female family members” to fulfil the childcare duties, which also in itself, demonstrates the disproportionate primary caregiving role bestowed upon women in society.

The traditional 9-to-5 five days a week has been the norm for decades, but for working women with family responsibilities, it’s an outdated model that simply doesn’t align with the demands of modern life (Pearson, 2024). The results of this research also illustrate this, with multiple interviewees noting that a 4-day working week structure would permit them to “catch up” on all of their family responsibilities, in turn providing women with a better work life balance.

Flexibility is not a bonus for mothers of the working world, it is a necessity. Despite this, in a survey conducted in 2021, half of working mothers do not get the flexibility at work that they request (TUC, 2021). The research that has been conducted in this project highlights the desire and need for flexibility that employment must provide for women with familial commitments, with flexible working being the highest rated family friendly policy within the options provided in the quantitative survey.

Limitations of the Study and Areas for Future Research

While the researcher is of the opinion that a mixed method approach was the appropriate choice for this study, using this approach meant that some of the qualitative research participants also took part in the quantitative survey. This meant that a

reiteration of the same perspectives could arise within the overall data collection process, with the potential to create redundancy in the data, with participants of the qualitative interview process potentially possessing predetermined judgements about the research topic, as a result of their participation in the quantitative element of the research, and vice versa.

From a race perspective, this study lacked diversity of participants. Over 90% of the respondents of the quantitative survey were Caucasian, while all of the qualitative interviewees were of Irish descent. Since the pandemic, mothers of colour are bearing the brunt of the impact when it comes to balancing their careers with family life (*Place, 2021*). Therefore, future research focused on this specific demographic could add to the findings of this study and ensure a more inclusive and representative understanding of the treatment that this demographic are subjected to within the professional world as a result of their caregiving commitments.

While this research sought to demonstrate how the professional world as a whole operates without the acknowledgement that women are primary caregivers of the world, future research could endeavour to understand the treatment received by women with familial commitments within specific industries, for example women with familial commitments in STEM occupations, which is historically a male-dominated industry.

The perspectives of supervisors, working fathers and governmental organisations that address themes related to the professional world and working mothers should also be explored in future research to determine how the attitudes and opinions of these demographics directly or inadvertently give rise to the experiences of working mothers in the professional world. A quantitative survey that would contribute to the credibility of this study would be to pose the same questions to men with familial commitments/fathers and to draw a comparative analysis of the data obtained between the different data sets. I would also recommend that future studies take place across a longer research period. This study only obtained the perspectives and opinions of working women with familial commitments at a specific point in time in their career, however, by posing the same questions over the course over different points within their

career, a more indepth and thorough representation of the experiences had by working women within the professional world could be acquired.

Conclusion

The notion that women with familial commitments are in the same career race as the rest of society's workforce is a misguided and misinformed belief. The data collected during this research process has demonstrated that women are expected to be able to play a multifaceted role within society, the role of caregiver and professional, with the notion that neither of these roles will suffer as a result of the other.. However, as has been illustrated within this research project, women themselves, and their careers are suffering because of this, with women in the current professional climate having to make the complicated trade-off between caregiving commitments and career commitments.

The results of this research indicate that for organisations to carry on in the most productive and professional manner, which is required in the current highly competitive and corporate climate of today, they must look to utilise and yield the greatest benefit from all of their workforce, and not just those whose only commitment is their career.

Employers can and must implement policies that foster the opportunity for women with familial commitments to be given the tools and resources to balance and thrive within their professional capacity.

Conclusions

“Women have always worked. They have worked unpaid, underpaid, underappreciated, and invisibly, but they have always worked. But the modern workplace does not work for women.”- Caroline Criado-Pérez (Author of Invisible Women, 2019).

This thesis set out to outline the way in which the professional world operates without the acknowledgement that women are the primary caregivers of the world. This research has highlighted the impact of persistent gender unequal policies, extensive social and organisational barriers and the influence of wider governmental policies on

working mother's participation in the workplace, and even furthermore their professional prosperity. Therefore, it is suggested that the professional world must enact policies and behaviours that prop up working mother's workforce participation, not put it down, and to do so for the good not only of this demographic, but for the benefit of the professional world as a whole as we have seen that this demographic are a productive, efficient and valuable asset to any organisation.

We like to think that the caregiving work that women do is just about individual women caring for their individual family members to their own individual benefit. It isn't. Women's caregiving work is work that society depends on, and without it we could argue that the professional world in itself wouldn't be as productive as a place (*Perez, 2020*). Therefore, it is vital that working women with caregiving commitments are given the tools and the means to balance and succeed, to ensure their continued participation in both their caregiving role, and their professional role, possibly through the implementation of schemes that were a recurring theme throughout this research project, such as providing subsidised childcare services, effective and extended paternity leave policies and more flexible working arrangements.

This thesis has also outlined the impact of past governmental legislation that has impacted the participation of working mothers in the professional world. While some of these discriminatory laws have been revoked, it is true to say that the effects that they have had can be still seen today due to the social normalities that they have moulded and continue to uphold in our society today. Furthermore, some systems still remain in place today, which continue to bolster favouritism towards married and single working fathers, and hinder married and single working mothers, perpetuating the idea that the professional needs of working mothers are not as equally important as their male colleagues.

As previously outlined, there are certain limitations of this research project that must be taken into consideration. The results of this research could be more precise if a larger and more multicultural sample had been included in the research. Future research projects should make allowances for this to be able to obtain a full scope of the

treatment experiences of working mothers in the professional world, not just from those of a specific socio-economic, ethnic background or national origin.

There is no data in this study or others that suggest that working mothers are subjected to preferential treatment because of the primary caregiving role that they possess in their personal lives, and the qualitative and quantitative research utilised in this survey actually convey that quite the opposite is true, with the childless and male demographic experiencing less discriminatory, biased and advantageous treatment in the professional world. In turn, working mothers are experiencing repressed hiring opportunities, financial compensation and promotional opportunities within the world of work due to the significant caregiving responsibilities bestowed upon them. This thesis has highlighted that we need to start designing the world of employment with the inclusion of women with caregiving commitments, rather than only centering it on the workforce of the past, that being unencumbered male employees as this scenario is not the correct depiction of the professional world today, as 73% of mothers with kids under 18 are in the workforce (*Robinson, 2023*).

It is the hope that the professional world will soon be a level playing field of career progression and gratification, both for those employees who are unencumbered by caregiving commitments, and for those who have significant caregiving responsibilities,, but also for the benefit of the organisations themselves, as it has been proved time and time again that working mothers are advantageous to the professional world and its productivity.

Until that time, organisations within the professional world should be cognisant of the additional personal commitments bestowed upon women within society, and strive to correct themselves from enacting any bias against these employees due to their familial commitments and make strides to lift these women up instead of set them back.


Declaración de Uso de Herramientas de Inteligencia Artificial Generativa en Trabajos Fin de Grado

Por la presente, yo, Caitlín McGonagle, estudiante de Grado en Administración y Dirección de Empresas con Mención en Internacional de la Universidad Pontificia Comillas al presentar mi Trabajo Fin de Grado titulado "How the Professional World Operates without the Acknowledgment that Women are the Primary Caregivers of the World ", declaro que he utilizado la herramienta de Inteligencia Artificial Generativa ChatGPT u otras similares de IAG de código sólo en el contexto de las actividades descritas a continuación [el alumno debe mantener solo aquellas en las que se ha usado ChatGPT o similares y borrar el resto.

1. **Metodólogo:** Para descubrir métodos aplicables a problemas específicos de investigación.
2. **Sintetizador y divulgador de libros complicados:** Para resumir y comprender literatura compleja.

Afirmo que toda la información y contenido presentados en este trabajo son producto de mi investigación y esfuerzo individual, excepto donde se ha indicado lo contrario y se han dado los créditos correspondientes (he incluido las referencias adecuadas en el TFG y he explicitado para que se ha usado Chat GPT u otras herramientas similares). Soy consciente de las implicaciones académicas y éticas de presentar un trabajo no original y acepto las consecuencias de cualquier violación a esta declaración.

Fecha: 4 June 2024

Firma: 

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Section 1: Introduction

1. I have read the disclaimer above and give my consent for the responses I provide to be included in the research carried out

Yes

No

2. Nationality

3. Age

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-55

55-64

65+

4. Do you have children?

Yes

No

5. Amount of years spent in paid employment?

1-3 Years

4-7 Years

8-15 Years

16-20 Years

20+ Years

6. Level of Education Achieved

Secondary School/ High School

Bachelor's Degree

Masters Degree

Doctorate or PhD

Section 2: Opinions & Experiences of Professional World & Its Policies

7. Do you feel that the maternity leave policy in your country is sufficient/enough?

Yes

No

8. Do you feel that the paternity leave policy in your country is sufficient/enough?

Yes

No

9. Do you think that if you did not have children/caregiving commitments, you would have achieved/would achieve more in your professional career/make more money within your career?

Yes

No

10. Do you feel that you take on more caregiving/family responsibilities than your male significant other?

Yes

No

11. Have you ever had to change your employment status (besides maternity leave) because of your family/caregiving commitments (e.g, move to part-time, leave your job)

Yes

No

12. Have you ever felt less favoured/discriminated against in any of your previous or current employment because of being a woman?

Yes

No

13. Have you ever felt less favoured discriminated against in any of your previous or current employment because of being a mother?

Yes

No

Section 3: Family Friendly Policies

Please rate the following options on a scale of 1-5 (1= not helpful; 5 = very helpful)

Please rate the following family friendly policies in terms of how helpful they would be in balancing your professional and caregiving/family commitments

14. 4 day work week

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

15. Working from Home/ Remote working

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

16. Paid Childcare included in Job Benefits

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

17. Flexible Working Schedule

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

18. Longer/Obligatory Paternity Leave

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Section 4: Your Experience with your Current Organisation

19. Do you currently work for an organisation?

Yes

I am currently **not** in employment

Please rate the following options on a scale of 1-5(1= strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree)

20. My organisation supports the lifestyle I desire as a working mother

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

21. I feel comfortable asking for time off for family emergencies and events

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

22. If I wanted to, I feel that my organisation would be supportive of me having more children

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

23. My organisation gives me the flexibility to meet both my work and family commitments

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Appendix 2: Interview questions

1. Do you feel that the maternity leave policy in your country is sufficient/enough?
Can you provide any thoughts/feelings/opinions you have about it?
2. Do you feel that the paternity leave policy in your country is sufficient/enough?
Can you provide any thoughts/feelings/opinions you have about it?
3. Do you feel that you have/take on more family commitments and responsibilities than your male significant other?
4. What do you think are the main factors that contribute to the way mothers are treated/viewed in the working world today?
5. Can you give me the first 3 words that come to mind when you think of mothers in the workplace?
6. Have you ever had to leave employment/change your employment status (besides maternity leave) because of your caregiving/family responsibilities/workload?
7. Have you ever felt that you were treated less favourably than a female colleague without children or a male colleague, with or without children?
8. Do you feel that returning to work after maternity leave, you were treated any differently?
9. Do you think that if you did not have children/caregiving commitments, you would have achieved/ would achieve more in your professional career/make more money within your career?
10. Do you think any measure could be put in place to make the work/life balance more manageable for women with children/caregiving commitments?

