DBS BUSINESS REVIEW

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Editorial

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Welcome to the guest-edited fourth issue of the DBS Business Review. There have been a number of personnel changes since the last issue of the DBS Business Review. Former managing editor, and founding cornerstone of the journal, Jane Buggle has moved on to become Librarian at IADT. Editor-in-Chief Dr. Garry Prentice is currently on a career break. Garry put together much of this issue and, as such, did all of the heavy lifting. On the matter of heavy lifting, Matt Kelleher, Head of the DBS Academic Information and Resource Centre, took over managing editing duties from Jane and has successfully brought this issue together, with his team of library staff. There have also been changes within his team. Laoise Darragh, Joan Colvin and Robert Alfis, collectively known as the Business Review's engine room, have moved on to be replaced by new Research Librarian Tiernan O'Sullivan, Information Literacy Manager Trevor Haugh and Library Assistant Amy Fitzpatrick. Thank you very much to Jane, Joan, Robert, Laoise and Garry for their Trojan work for the Business Review and also to Matt, Trevor, Tiernan and Amy for taking on the mantle for this and future issues. We all collectively look forward to the return of Dr. Garry Prentice to take up his role as Editor-in-Chief.

Previous issues of the DBS Business Review have highlighted the cross-discipline, open access and applied nature of the research published in the journal. This issue puts the focus on another aspect of DBS Business Review's scope; "to feature peer reviewed articles from … undergraduate and postgraduate students alongside faculty" (DBS Library, 2021).

Many higher education institutes are exploring the concept of students as partners (SaP) in learning, which has been referred to as "arguably one of the most important issues facing higher education in the 21st century" (Healey, Flint & Harrington, 2014), yet remains a contested area (Matthews, Dwyer, Hine & Turner, 2018). Research is one area of academia with a long tradition of students and faculty working in partnership. The more distinct and separate teacher-learner relationship typical of taught higher education tends to blur during research. As lecturers become supervisors, their role tends to become more like a facilitator than a teacher. Likewise, the research journey allows supervised learners to take on more responsibility and drive the learning for themselves and their supervisors. The

burgeoning SaP movement can look to the traditional lecturer-learner relationship that develops during research for clues as to how students can become partners in many more aspects of higher education.

There is considerable value in lecturers and students co-authoring research. Payne & Monk-Turner (2005) highlight the practical writing and research skills that learners develop as co-authors as well the way in which collaboratively working on a research project with a lecturer will help prepare students for the relationships they will encounter in the workplace. Similarly, Pinheiro, Melkers & Youtie (2014) suggest that graduate student publication is a predictor of later career success. Unfortunately, lecturers and learners working collaboratively on research projects does not always translate into recognition for the learners. Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017), for example, lamented the apparent failure of co-inquiry in research by student and faculty to translate into co-authorship.

I am delighted to say that the fears of Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) are not translated into this issue of the DBS Business Review, where each article features students either as sole authors or as lead co-authors with faculty. The issue opens with a collaboration between postgraduate Syed A. Jilani and undergraduate Mahnur Gilani, whose research looks at the concept of organisational justice among healthcare professionals working in Ireland. Staying in the realm of organisational behaviour, undergraduate Larry Maguire and lecturer Dr John Hyland adopt a mixed-methods approach to look at Job Specific Well-being amongst self-employed and directly-employed workers in creative and corporate workplaces. The theme of employee well-being is also examined by postgraduate student Ann-Marie Carragher and lecturer Dr. Lucian Lolich, this time in relation to the importance of organisational support in the form of media training for women footballers' use of social media. Another aspect of marketing, user perceptions of website cookie banners, is the subject of the next article, authored solely by postgraduate student Lakshmi N. Jayakumar. The need for organisational support for employee well-being is revisited in the final research article by higher diploma student Niamh O'Rourke and lecturer Dr John Hyland, who together investigate the coping strategies employed by Irish firefighters as they relate to perceived stress and anxiety levels. Finally, this issue concludes with a review of the 2014 Walter Mischel book The Marshmallow Test: Understand Self-Control and How to Master It by postgraduate student Francine Romani.

If the main theme of this issue of the DBS Business Review is students as authors and co-authors with lecturers, then the sub-theme is the need for organisations to support the people who work there. From firefighters dealing with stress to women footballers trying to navigate the tricky world of social media, positive organisational behaviour appears based on the willingness of organisations to provide the appropriate support and guidance. In the context of student-lecturer partnerships in research, the sub theme of this issue therefore, begs the question: What support and guidance are higher education institutes currently offering learners and lecturers to

transition to a SaP environment, where governance, policies and practices become the shared responsibility of learner, lecturers and managers alike?

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Cross-sectional Analyses of Self-employed and Directly Employed Workers' Job-specific Well-being in Creative and Corporate Workplaces

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Abstract

The current mixed-methods study explored differences in Job Specific Well-being (JSWB) amongst self-employed and directly-employed workers in creative and corporate workplaces. A descriptive, cross-sectional, comparative design with open-ended questions, employing purposive sampling, was used. A self-report, mixed method, digital questionnaire was used for data collection and respondents (N=230) were sourced globally. Analyses showed a significant difference in JSWB for overall self-employed compared with overall directly-employed workers. An effect of supervisory responsibility on JSWB was observed among groups of directly-employed workers. For self-employed workers, no significant effect of supervisory responsibility was seen for levels of JSWB. Additionally for self-employed workers, no significant difference in JSWB was seen based on "necessity" or "opportunity" self-employment. Generally, findings showed that both self-employed and directly employed workers in the current sample were dissatisfied with daily work. Findings were mixed, and results prompt important considerations for existing research.
Keywords: Happiness; Unhappiness; Job-specific well-being; Job satisfaction; Work; Employment; Self-employed; Entrepreneurship.

Introduction

According to Peter Warr at the University of Sheffield, happiness and unhappiness are central to human existence (Warr, 2019). Happiness is a sense of overall psychological well-being and may include feelings of fulfillment in oneself, energy and enthusiasm, a sense of full functioning, wholeness and self-realisation (Warr, 2011), and a sense of flow and optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Close relations of this overall sense of well-being are work-related well-being and job satisfaction (Tait, Padgett and Baldwin, 1989). As such, daily work and our feelings about it both influence, and in turn, are influenced

by, overall life satisfaction. Consequently, job and life satisfaction are significantly and reciprocally related (Judge and Wantanbe, 1993). Reviews of contemporary literature on well-being at work have shown that higher levels of subjective well-being are associated with good general health, longevity, improved personal relationships, higher levels of performance at work, and increased creativity (Diener, Oishi and Tay, 2018; Warr and Nielsen, 2018). In his discussion on the relationship between general well-being and well-being at work, Peter Warr suggests that daily work is a source of social cohesion, material welfare, and is critical to the mental and physical health of the individual (Warr, 2002, p. ix). Warr says that overall or "context-free" well-being has a broader concern than "job-specific" well-being, the latter being related to an individual's feelings about themselves in their daily work. It is this latter aspect with which the current study is generally focused, and more specifically, given that health and well-being in the workplace are a critical concern for mainstream organisational research (Danna and Griffin, 1999), the current study seeks to explore how job-specific well-being differs between self-employed and directly employed workers.

A point of interest for the current study is how "job-specific" well-being is reported by those engaged in creative work specifically. Given the mixed results obtained from a 2016 study of well-being amongst creative versus non-creative workers (Fujiwara and Lawton, 2016), the current study aims to explore this via the following three-part question. Firstly, is there a difference in job-specific well-being (JSWB) between self-employed and directly-employed workers in creative and corporate workplaces? Secondly, is JSWB amongst self-employed and directly employed workers in creative and corporate domains of work dependent on supervisory responsibility? Lastly, where workers in creative and corporate domains of work choose self-employment over direct employment, is job-specific well-being influenced by the necessity to find work (e.g. as a result of job loss), or their recognition and pursuit of a commercial opportunity? The present study investigates these questions using a composite dependent variable referred to as "job-specific well-being" (JSWB). In an effort to, perhaps, inform quantitative findings, the current study employs a single open-ended question examining the individual's personal feelings about their daily work. Given the scarcity in the available literature of research pertaining to JSWB amongst those who regard their daily work as creative (as opposed to traditional corporate) and who are self-employed, the current study aims to provide insight into the field of work psychology for this cohort of the workforce. The following section outlines these research questions and their rationale in further detail.

Composite DV Rationale

The composite dependent variable selected is composed of Satisfaction with Work Scale (SWSS) (Gagné, *et al*., 2007), Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999), and the 12 item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg and Williams, 2000). The selection of these measures accounts for the conceptual rationale that human relationship to daily work is not a discrete aspect of life to be examined in isolation. As highlighted by Judge and Wantanbe (1993), job and life satisfaction are perhaps inseparable. Unlike a significant portion of contemporary research which utilises individual measures of work-related well-being to assess, in isolation, workers' attitudes about work, it is suggested herein that an account of broader aspects of well-being should be included. The

current research suggests that "the individual at work" overlaps and encompasses other conceptual life elements and is a fundamental component that influences, and in turn, is influenced by broader aspects of life. As such, SWWS was chosen for its ability to obtain a global measure of work satisfaction. SHS was chosen to measure respondents' degree of happiness at a given point in time. And GHQ-12 was selected so that the composite DV encompassed a measure of overall mental well-being. It is considered, therefore, that the three measures selected may reflect a more balanced overall assessment of an individual's well-being as it relates to daily work. Additionally, it was considered a significant benefit to the current study that a qualitative component be included such that individual responses might inform and aid interpretation of quantitative results obtained**.**

Job-specific Well-being in Self-employed and Directly-employed Workers
The pursuit of financial security, work-related success and happiness leads most individuals into direct salaried employment. A study by the OECD recently reported that 85% of workers in 19 Euro area states are engaged in direct-salaried employment compared to 15% in self-employment (OECD, 2019). Blanchflower (2004) suggested that rates of self-employment have been generally declining across OECD countries. More recently, research undertaken on behalf of the European Commission (Fondeville *et al.*, 2015), reports there to have been increases in self-employment in the EU since 2007. However, researchers accounted for this increase as due to "bogus self-employment" as opposed to "bonafide self-employment". In other words, these workers were 'dependent' on a single source of income (employer) rather than multiple sources as would be expected from bonafide self-employed. When self-employment rates were corrected for this and factors including hours worked, a decline was observed. Despite the apparent declining, or perhaps at best, static trend in self-employment growth in the EU, a wealth of research shows that the self-employed are more satisfied with their work than directly employed workers (Benz and Frey, 2004; Andersson, 2008; Lange, 2012; Binder and Coad, 2013), and the self-employed report significantly greater accomplishment in their lives than those directly employed (Warr, 2018). This appears to run counter to data suggesting, for example, that self-employed workers spend more time at work than their directly-employed counterparts (European Commission, 2016a), earn less than those directly employed (Hamilton, 2000; Green and Mostafa, 2012), experience higher levels of stress and anxiety (Warr, 2018) and regularly lose sleep over worry (Blanchflower, 2004). Additionally, results from a study by Jamal (2007) showed higher overall burnout, emotional exhaustion and lack of work satisfaction amongst self-employed workers compared to directly employed workers.

Interestingly, Hamilton (2000) further suggests that despite earning less, the non-pecuniary benefits of self-employment such as personal freedom and autonomy are substantial. In support of Hamilton, Warr (2018) indicated that these non-pecuniary benefits come despite the absence of sick-pay, employer pension contributions, and various other employee-specific benefits. Interestingly, perhaps, research by Blanchflower (2004) suggested that directly employed workers reported a preference for self-employment. With regard to workers engaged in creative pursuits, studies report that creative capacity is not significantly correlated with overall happiness (Ceci and Kumar, 2016). Artists earn less, on average, than they

would with the same qualifications in other professions, and their earnings reflect greater inequality than those of comparative groups (Steiner, 2017). Additionally, Steiner suggests that artists suffer from above-average unemployment and constrained underemployment such as non-voluntary part-time or intermittent work. However, Steiner also suggests that creative workers appear not to be outcome-driven, and greater job satisfaction may be derived from superior procedural characteristics of creative work. Indeed, it is this process-driven aspect of creative work which the current study hopes to expand on via open-ended question. Additionally, it has been reported that on average, artists enjoy higher job satisfaction than other employees, mainly due to more autonomy (Steiner, 2017; Bille *et al*., 2013). This seems consistent with studies which take a broader view of job-specific well-being and happiness amongst the self-employed.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned studies, there appears to be a lack of empirical evidence relating to JSWB amongst creative self-employed workers. Moreover, as previously discussed, there appears generally to be a paradoxical nature to broad based findings on the self-employed. Self-employment amongst the working population is much less compared to direct employment, yet research suggests the sense of autonomy and fulfilment amongst self-employed workers appears to be higher than that of directly employed workers. Self-employed workers' compensation is often lower and their working hours higher. The self-employed seem to suffer adverse psychological effects of their work, yet research suggests that those who choose self-employment are happier. Therefore, the first aim of the current study seeks to examine job-specific well-being in self-employed workers compared to their directly employed counterparts in creative and corporate domains of work, where it is predicted that differing levels of job-specific well-being will be recorded.

Influence of Supervisory Responsibility on Workers' Job-specific Well-being
Research suggests that self-employed workers generally appear to be happier than directly employed workers (Benz and Frey, 2004; Prottas and Thompson, 2006; Anderson, 2008; Lange, 2012; Binder and Coad, 2013). However, where the specific domains of creative and corporate work are concerned, does supervision of staff have a bearing? Are self-employed workers who oversee staff and directly-employed workers in managerial positions, affected equally by supervisory responsibility or is there a significant difference in JSWB between these two groups? Due to negligible literature available, the current study investigates these questions.

Research on workplace well-being comparing that of self-employed versus directly-employed workers is extensive and generally finds self-employed workers reporting greater job satisfaction than those directly-employed (Warr 2018; Anderson, 2008; Smeaton, 2003). This observation has also been recorded in studies examining participants in global samples (Benz and Frey, 2008; Lange, 2012). Exploring this further, Warr and Inceoglu (2018) reported that autonomy is a significant mediator of well-being amongst these groups. In support of this finding, research examining stress-strain in business owners versus non-business owners found that the former experienced lower levels of role ambiguity and role conflict, reduced emotional exhaustion, and higher levels of job and professional satisfaction than the latter (Tetrick *et al*., 2000). Further, Jamal (1997) found that role ambiguity and role conflict is higher for directly employed workers than for self-employed. Tetrick *et al.* (2000),

also reported that directly employed workers in corporations who occupy managerial positions and supervisory roles, report increased levels of job satisfaction over those who do not. Interestingly, findings for self-employed workers with supervisory responsibility for staff appear to reflect the contrary.

In a study on personal values and varieties of happiness and unhappiness in the workplace, Warr (2018) found that job satisfaction amongst the self-employed exceeds that of directly employed workers but only where the former have no supervisory responsibility for other workers. Warr's research reports that where supervisory responsibility for others is absent, being directly-employed is pointedly different from being self-employed. In an organisation, Warr suggests, workers with non-supervisory responsibility are directed by managers and work within the often-strict constraints of their role. On the contrary, solo self-employed workers responsible for only themselves, must continually self-regulate, self-direct and be largely autonomous. The difference in the nature and demand of self-employed versus directly-employed workers in these contrasting situations, can account for the difference in their self-reported job-specific well-being (Warr, 2018). With regard to workers with supervisory responsibility; self-employed workers hiring subordinate staff for the first time may have previously been successful working alone. However, demanding tasks for which they usually found solutions may now weigh heavily on their subordinates, subsequently creating management challenges for the new employer. Not only must the new employer maintain current business activities, they must now also supervise staff, and navigate associated employee-related challenges. Unlike their contemporaries in management positions under direct employment, self-employed workers with supervisory responsibility for others may have little peer support, established routines or management practices upon which they can rely. Warr (2018) indicates that management of staff under these conditions reduces the new employer's autonomy and JSWB.

Warr's (2018) findings seem to suggest that JSWB is dependent on workers' personal values such as autonomy and ability to self-direct, and for the self-employed who would normally experience higher levels, there is a reported reduction in well-being where they are required to supervise staff. On the other hand, positions of responsibility within the structures of an organisation appear to be associated with increased JSWB over that reported by non-supervisory workers under the same corporate structures. As there seems to be an absence of data specific to creative self-employed workers, an aim of the current study is to establish the extent to which differences in their JSWB and that of their directly employed counterparts is moderated by supervisory responsibilities. Such findings may help in identifying the impact of supervision of others on JSWB in these groups.

Influence of Necessity and Opportunity Self-employment on Workers Job-specific Well-being
A focus of the current study concerns whether the need for self-employed, and the creative self-employed in particular, to generate income and provide for their family (necessity) or the recognition of a commercial opportunity (opportunity) influence their reported levels of JSWB. "Necessity" entrepreneurship is a relatively new and perhaps controversial term in contemporary employment/self-employment research, and was first introduced in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), the country

by country global study of entrepreneurship (Frederick *et al.*, 2001). It has been deemed controversial insofar as it has been linked to corporate pursuit of perhaps unfair cost efficiencies which are said to "force" direct employees into forms of "bogus" self-employment. As noted earlier (Fondeville *et al.*, 2015), this 'bogus' self-employment has been shown to contribute significantly towards recorded increases in self-employment levels in Europe since 2007. As suggested by Perulli (2003), this form of employment exists within a "grey area" between employment and bonafide self-employment. Indeed, Block and Koellinger (2009) made the distinction between necessity and opportunity entrepreneurship, where necessity entrepreneurs have a lower average satisfaction with their startup than their counterparts who were motivated through opportunity. Furthermore, Binder and Coad, (2013) suggest "necessity" and "opportunity" self-employment are mediating choice factors with self-employment often chosen as a means to escape unemployment rather than for reasons related to personal factors such as autonomy. The researchers regard this distinction to be one of the most significant influences towards heterogeneity in the self-employed. In research examining the impact of "necessity" as a motivation for new business start-up on entrepreneurial satisfaction conducted by Kautonen and Palmroos (2010), it was discovered that participants were somewhat more likely to want to return to direct employment later in their careers. Given the nature of research findings in this area, and once again, the absence of data pertaining specifically to creative self-employed, the current study aims to examine necessity versus opportunity as mediating factors in job-specific well-being amongst workers in the creative arts and corporate domains.

The Current Study
The aim of the current study was to explore "job-specific well-being" (JSWB) amongst self-employed and directly-employed workers in creative and corporate workplaces with the following four hypotheses proposed: 1) Self-employed and directly-employed workers operating in creative and corporate domains of work will differ generally on JSWB. 2) Self-employed workers in creative and corporate domains of work will differ on JSWB based on the presence or absence of supervisory responsibility (SR). 3) Directly-employed workers in creative and corporate domains of work will differ on JSWB based on the presence or absence of supervisory responsibility (SR). 4) Necessity and opportunity self-employed workers will differ on JSWB based on their necessity or opportunity based motivation for self-employment. From the qualitative perspective, a single open-ended question exploring how participants felt about their current daily work was included.

Methodology

Materials
Participants completed a self-report questionnaire consisting of a battery of quantitative single item and multiple item measures. Participants were presented with a detailed information sheet once they consented to participate which outlined the purpose of the study, the aim of the research, and details concerning consent, right to withdraw, and contact details of the research team. Six demographic questions followed which included age group, employment status, domain of work (creative or corporate), whether respondents' work was a primary source of income,

if they had supervisory responsibilities, and where applicable, their reason for choosing self-employment. Three psychometric measures (see below) were employed which were compiled into a composite measure of well-being titled "job-specific well-being" (JSWB). IBM SPSS software was used to analyse the data. NVivo software was used to analyse qualitative responses (see design section). Psychometric measures employed are outlined in the following sections:

Satisfaction with Work Scale (SWWS)

The Satisfaction with Work Scale (Bérubé *et al*., 2007) is adapted from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener *et al*., 1985) and is applicable to a workplace context to obtain a short global measure of work satisfaction. The SWWS is a reliable and valid measure of satisfaction at work with a reported internal reliability α = .75 (Gagné *et al*., 2007). The scale offers seven statements with which respondents may agree or disagree, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) Scores are totalled with a possible range of 7-35. Lower scores indicate extreme dissatisfaction with higher scores indicating extreme satisfaction.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999) is a short 4-item scale designed to measure respondents' subjective happiness at a given point in time. Each item in the scale is completed by choosing one of 7 options (1-7) that reflect the respondent's level of agreement with the given sentence. Previous research by the author (Lyubomirsky and Tucker, 1998) found that self-rated happy respondents tended to think about both positive and negative life events more favourably and adaptively. Select items were reversed coded and the mean of the 4 items is calculated.

General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) (Goldberg and Williams, 2000) is a self-administered screening instrument designed to detect depth of current mental disturbances and disorders. It is a widely-employed mental health measure for detection of emotional disturbances. The current study employs the GHQ-12 with Yusof (2010) reporting reliability range from .85 to .93. Individual items range from 0 (not at all) to 3 (much more than usual). The score is used to generate a total score ranging from 0 to 36. High scores indicate poorer general mental health.

Participants

Participants were English speaking, sourced from a global population, and were non-gender specific. Inclusion required participants to be minimum 18 years-old, self-employed or directly employed, and currently working in a creative or corporate environment. Participants were sourced via business social platforms such as LinkedIn, forums, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and business contacts list, and invited to participate. Participants could subsequently self-select to participate in the study by clicking the link provided in the message. Participants were required to be full-time, with their daily work providing their primary income means. Initial questions related to inclusion criteria were used to determine eligibility of respondents. Minimum total participants was established at 35 per group to ensure robustness as per sample size and normality requirements for proposed statistical analyses.

A total of 230 responses were collected for the current study of which 11.3% were aged 18-30 (N=26), 20.9% were 31-40 (N=48), 47% were 41-50 (N=108), 13.5% were 51-60 (N=31), and 7.4% were 60+ (N=17). For employment status, 40.4% (N=93) indicated they were self-employed while 56.1% (N=129) indicated direct employment. Additionally, 2.6% of respondents (N=6) indicated they were unemployed and .9% (N=2) indicated they were retired. These responses were omitted from further analysis. Thirty per cent (N=69) reported themselves working in a creative environment while 70% (N=161) reported their work to be corporate based. Where informed consent was not given, participation concluded and no data was collected. Assignment to groups was based on participant self-selection of demographic data.

Design

In the current study, a retrospective, cross-sectional survey design employing a qualitative open-ended measure was conducted. Non-probability convenience and snowball sampling methods were employed. For the qualitative component, an open-ended question was presented and responses were analysed using inductive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The self-report questionnaire was constructed using Microsoft Forms and distributed via online platforms to gather data from a globally based audience. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to examine the group mean differences on the composite measure of workplace wellbeing, "job-specific well-being" (JSWB).

For **hypothesis 1**, Employment Status (IV) comprised two levels; total self-employed (SE) and total directly employed (DE), and was analysed for differences on JSWB (DV). For **hypothesis 2**, a second IV, 'Self-employed supervisory responsibility' (Total_SESR) was developed consisting of four levels; 'Creative self-employed with supervisory responsibility' (CSEwSR), 'Creative self-employed without supervisory responsibility' (CSEwoSR), 'Corporate self-employed with supervisory responsibility' (CPSEwSR) and 'Corporate self-employed without supervisory responsibility' (CPSEwoSR) and was analysed for differences on JSWB. For **hypothesis 3**, the IV was calculated for 'Directly employed supervisory responsibility' (Total_DESR) with four levels; 'Creative directly employed with supervisory responsibility' (CDEwSR), 'Creative directly employed without supervisory responsibility' (CDEwoSR), 'Corporate directly employed with supervisory responsibility' (CPDEwSR), and 'Corporate directly employed without supervisory responsibility' (CPDEwoSR), and was analysed for differences on JSWB. For **hypothesis 4**, an independent variable 'Self-Employed under Necessity or Opportunity self-employment' (Total_SENO) was developed with four levels; 'Creative self-employed acting under necessity' (CSE-N), 'Creative self-employed acting under opportunity' (CSE-O), 'Corporate self-employed acting under necessity' (CPSE-N), and 'Corporate self-employed acting under opportunity' (CPSE-O), and was analysed for differences on JSWB.

Procedure

Microsoft Forms was used to construct the digital questionnaire, the link for which was then compressed and simplified using a link-shortener. The shortened link was then circulated via WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email list and contacts lists. An automation tool was also used to circulate the questionnaire link to social media accounts for several weeks on rotation. Upon clicking the shortened

link, potential participants were directed to the introductory page of the Microsoft form digital questionnaire. Here they were briefly introduced to the researcher and were informed as to the nature and intent of the study. They were further advised that some questions may cause minor negative feelings and assured that the questionnaire was of a standardised psychological format used widely as a research method. Additionally, the cover sheet advised visitors that participation was entirely voluntary and should they choose to take part, responses would be anonymous and confidential, and as such, withdrawal would not be possible subsequent to completion. Participants then moved through the question sequence commencing first with demographic questions, which were made compulsory due to group inclusion/exclusion criterion, then the SWWS, then SHS, and finally the GHQ. A debrief sheet with contact details for support services was presented on the final page of the questionnaire and participants were advised to make necessary contact with relevant services in the event they were negatively affected by the study. Upon final completion, the participants were thanked for their participation. After a two-week period, the questionnaire was closed to new participants. Raw data was then extracted in .csv file format on 2nd February 2020, formatted and tidied prior to import to IBM SPSS and NVivo software for analysis.

Ethics

The current research study endeavoured to ensure the highest level of ethical conduct. The requirement for strict adherence to the PSI code of professional ethics was upheld. It was a requisite to ensure informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. Permission was sought from forum and social media group moderators via email/direct message prior to circulation of the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected and participants' right to withdraw was outlined. A cover letter was included to outline the sensitive nature of the study. Informed consent was collected prior to advancing in the survey. A debrief sheet including contact details for relevant mental health services was presented to participants on completion. GDPR compliance was also ensured where email marketing software was used. With specific regard to the qualitative component of the current study, it was taken into account that participants were sharing potentially sensitive personal feelings and emotions regarding their working life. It was therefore important that participants were not identifiable through quotes used or other information. Participants were advised in advance as to how data was being collected, stored and after twelve months, that it would be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Prior to conducting the qualitative data collection and analysis, explicit decisions were required with regard to certain important issues and considerations. Reflection on the following elements was made prior and throughout the process. Themes reflected a pattern in the responses received, and an inductive, semantic, realist approach was employed for a rich analysis of the entire data corpus. Responses to the specific question guided coding and contributed to the overall thrust of the current research.

Results

Quantitative Results

A series of one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to examine differences between groups on the composite measure of job-specific well-being (JSWB). As previously described, the composite DV consisted of three individual outcome variables, satisfaction with work (M=15.19), subjective happiness (M=5.13) and general health (M=11.99). Preliminary assumptions checking for normality, linearity, multivariate and univariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity were carried out and, unless otherwise indicated, no serious violations were found. Acceptable alpha values were found for SWWS (α=.86) and SHS (α=.78), while alpha for the GHQ was below what would generally be considered acceptable (α=.48). See Table 1.0 for descriptive statistics.

Table 1.0: Descriptive statistics for each of the three individual outcome variables

Measure	EmpStatus	N	Mean	SD	α	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work Satisfaction	Self[*]	89	12.82	5.67			
	Direct[**]	125	17.03	6.20			
	Total	229	15.19	6.35	.86	.61	-.24
Subjective Happiness	Self[*]	89	5.17	1.24			
	Direct[**]	125	5.10	.95			
	Total	229	5.13	1.08	.78	-.37	-.25
General Health	Self[*]	89	11.94	3.42			
	Direct[**]	125	11.92	2.93			
	Total	224	11.99	3.12	.48	.09	-.32

[*] Self-employed workers in both creative and corporate domains of work
[**] Directly employed workers in both creative and corporate domains of work

A one-way MANOVA examined differences in JSWB between self-employed (N=89) and directly employed (N=125) workers generally. Multivariate tests through Pillai's trace revealed statistically significant difference (F(9,654) = 3.39, p < .001, η2 =

.045), therefore the null can be rejected.

Following a Bonferroni adjustment to .17 and examination of univariate results, a statistically significant difference was found for Satisfaction with work ($F_{(3,218)}$ = 8.97, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .11$), with self-employed workers reporting greater dissatisfaction with their work (M=12.82) compared to directly-employed workers *(M=17.03).* There was no significant difference found between groups on Subjective happiness ($F_{(3,218)}$ = .18, $p = .91$, effect size = .002) or General health ($F_{(3,218)}$ = .62, $p = .61$, $\eta2 = .008$). Figure 1 below illustrates visually a breakdown of results for group means on individual measures.
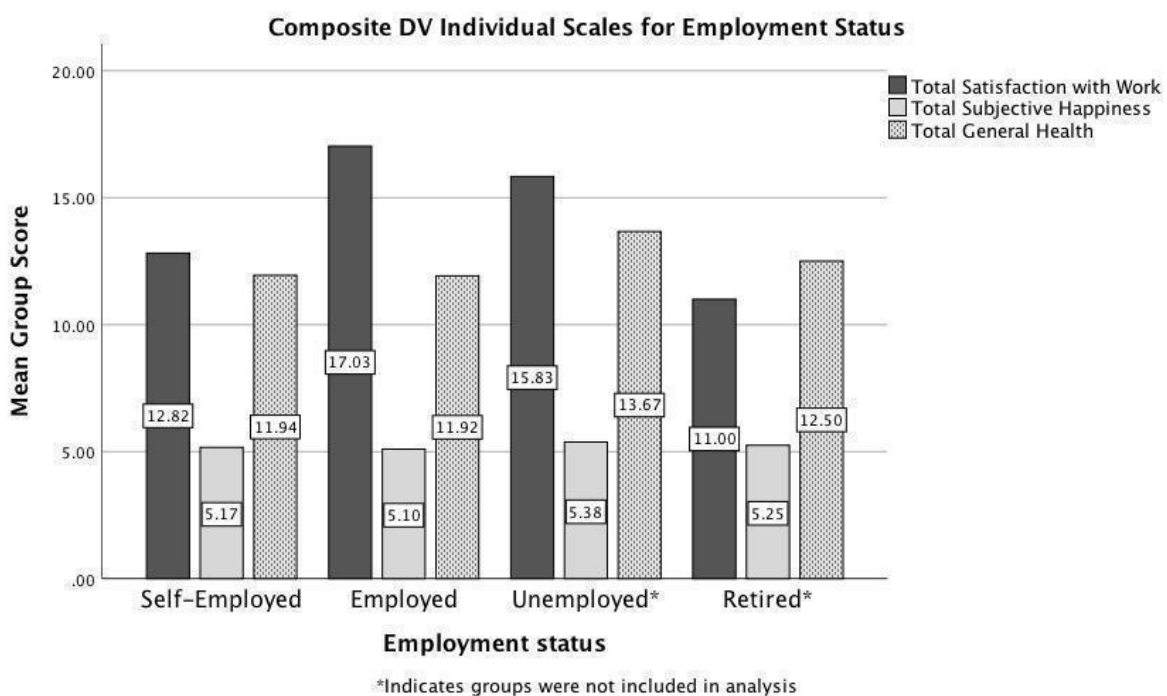
Figure 1: H1 mean group scores on individual measures comprising dependent variable JSWB

With specific focus on Self-employed workers, a second one-way MANOVA compared 'Creative' and 'Corporate' workers, with and without 'Supervisory responsibility', on JSWB. A new IV with four levels was computed, consisting of the 'creative self-employed with supervisory responsibility' (CSEwSR; N=14), the 'creative self-employed without supervisory responsibility' (CSEwoSR; N=29), the 'corporate self-employed with supervisory responsibility' (CPSEwSR; N=32) and the 'corporate self-employed without supervisory responsibility' (CPSEwoSR; N=14). Multivariate tests were conducted and Pillai's trace effect showed no statistically significant difference between groups ($F_{(9,202)}$ = 1.58, $p = .12$, $\eta2 = .053$) therefore the null is retained. See Figure 2 for visual representation of individual scale results.

Figure: H2 group mean scores on individual measures comprising dependent variable JSWB

A one-way MANOVA was also conducted to examine 'Creative' and 'Corporate' directly employed workers, with and without supervisory responsibility on JSWB. Similar to the previous analysis, a new IV with four levels was computed, 'creative directly employed with supervisory responsibility' (CDEwSR; N=15), the 'creative directly employed without supervisory responsibility' (CDEwoSR; N=3), the 'corporate directly employed with supervisory responsibility' (CPDEwSR; N=64) and the 'corporate directly employed without supervisory responsibility' (CPDEwoSR; N=43). Results suggest a statistically significant difference between the groups on JSWB ($F_{(9,290)} = 2.70$, $p = .005$, $\eta2 = .062$) therefore the null can be rejected.

Following a Bonferroni adjustment to .17 and examination of univariate results, no significant difference was found between groups on 'Satisfaction with work' ($F_{(3,121)} = 1.93$, $p = .13$, $\eta2 = .046$) or 'Subjective happiness' ($F_{(3,121)} = 1.01$, $p = .39$, $\eta2 = .024$). However, there was a significant difference shown on 'General health' ($F_{(3,121)} = 5.16$, $p = .002$, $\eta2 = .113$) with the CDEwSR group (M=14) demonstrating poorer psychological health compared to the CDEwoSR (M=11.67), CPDEwSR (M=11.09), and CPDEwoSR (M=12.44) groups. Figure 3 below provides an illustration of individual scale results.

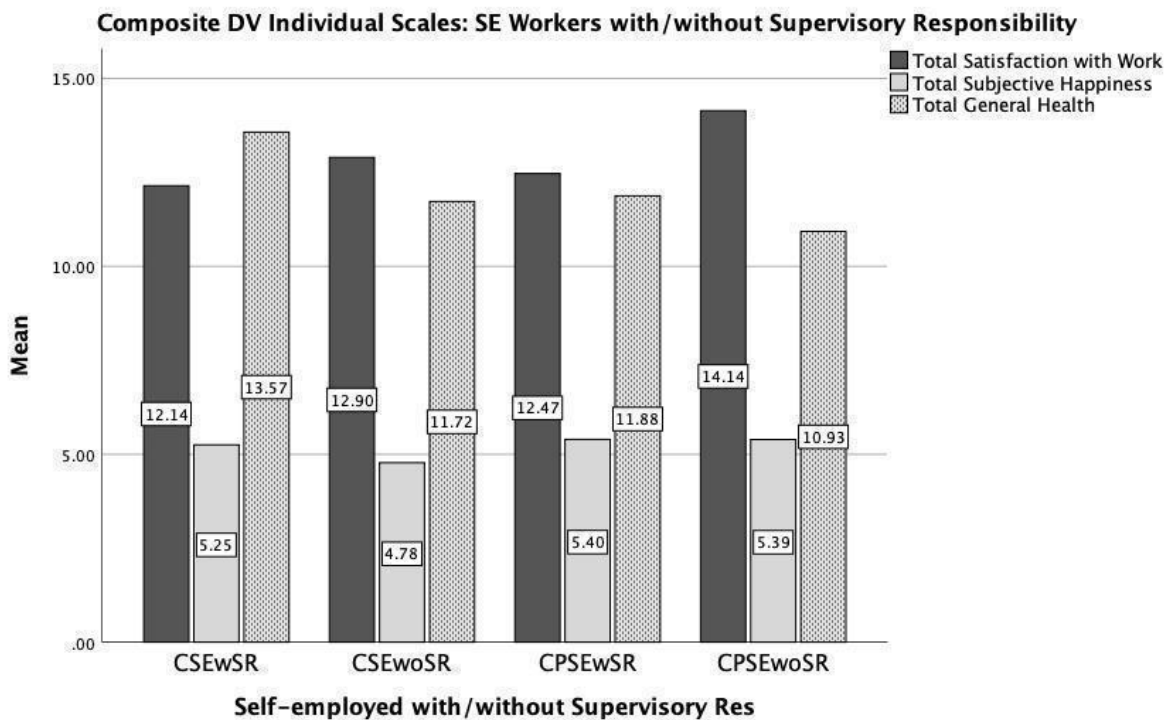**Composite DV Individual Scales: DE Workers with/without Supervisory Responsibility**
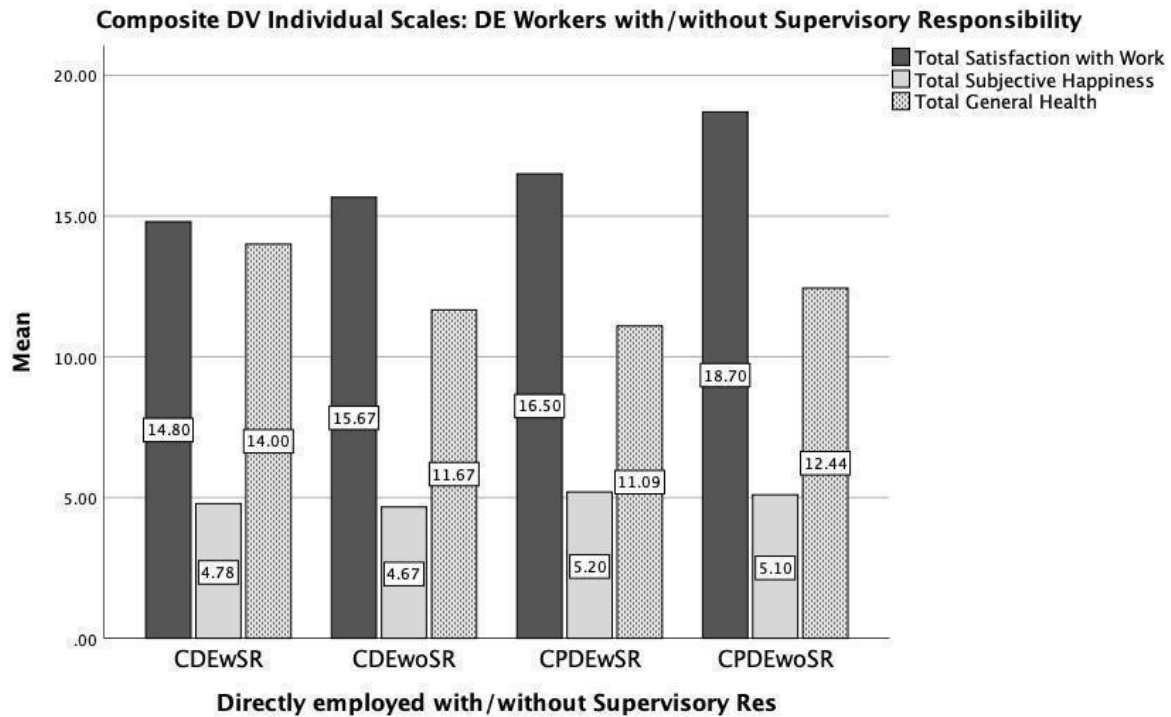
Figure 3: H3 group mean scores on individual measures comprising dependent variable JSWB

A final one-way MANOVA was conducted to examine JSWB of self-employed workers who commenced self-employment out of 'necessity' or out of 'opportunity'. A further IV with four levels was computed as follows; Creative self-employed out of necessity (CSE-N; N=7), Creative self-employed out of opportunity (CSE-O; N=32), Corporate self-employed out of necessity (CPSE-N; N=5) and Corporate self-employed out of opportunity (CPSE-O; N=37). Results suggest no statistically significant difference between groups on JSWB (F(9,231) = .90, p = .53, η2 = .034), therefore the null can be accepted.

Qualitative Results
Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was employed in the current study to analyse responses to the qualitative component open-ended question. The following analytic steps involved a non-linear inductive process of coding the data revealing common themes in the responses; familiarisation with the data, creation of codes from responses, formation of themes from the coding, review of themes review and refinement, definition and naming of themes, and production of a report. As seen in Figure 5, below, the word cloud illustrates words most used by respondents in detailing their feelings about their work. The word 'Enjoy', and stemmed words such as 'enjoyment', 'enjoyable' and 'enjoying' were most commonly used (2.25%). Fifty three per cent of responses coded were positively framed, 42% were negative and 5% were neutral.

Figure 5: Word cloud representation of most frequently used words by respondents

Subsequent to data analysis and coding, the following themes were revealed in participant responses; Contentment, Apathy, Enjoyment and Meaning, Means to an End, and Burnout.

Theme 1: Contentment
This first theme can be defined as a particular degree of neutral contentment with work and reflects 5% of responses coded. There was neither stress or anxiety, or excitement and enthusiasm present in responses. Respondents reported to be "generally happy," "relatively happy," and "comfortable" as can be observed by participant 65's response; "Generally happy with daily work. Could be managing diary and time a bit better, but improving in this area constantly".

Theme 2: Apathy
Theme 2 can be defined as indifference, disengagement and an apathetic relationship with work, and reflects 13% of coded responses. Respondents reported to be bored and lacking enthusiasm for work. This can be recognised from the comment from respondent 147; "Mostly boring and repetitive with the occasional challenge. Good relationship to my boss, which helps, but the tasks are too monotone to compensate," and participant 154's response; "Do not 'love it' but not the worst".

Theme 3: Enjoyment and Meaning

By far the most numerous response type observed from Figure 5 above, was that of enjoyment, happiness and positive relationship with work. Theme 3 represents 53% of coded responses and is defined as feelings of challenge but reward and meaning. Participants used words such as "grateful," "fortunate" and "blessed" to describe their relationship with work. As respondent 176 expressed it; "I feel honoured that I get to serve other people". Participant 189 suggests; "I know I am possibly in a rare situation as an employee, but I do very much enjoy my work," and participant 10; "I'm fulfilled by my work, it is corporate in nature but it has meaning". It should be noted, however, in almost all cases respondents held a caveat to these positive feelings.

Theme 4: Means to an End

Theme 4 can be defined as a transactional relationship with work and accounts for 11% of coded responses. Terms such as "tedious," "necessary" and "pays the bills" were used by participants to describe their feelings about work. As participant 44 puts it; "It's a grind, only doing it cos it pays the bills and hopefully provide a starting block for the kids when the time arises". Participant 166 reports; "I work to live, I don't live to work," and participant 119; "A means to an end to get what I want".

Theme 5: Burnout

Theme 5 can be defined as a feeling of working too hard, being emotionally stretched and anxious, represents 18% of coded responses. Words such as "under-appreciated," "overwhelmed" and "frustrated" were used to describe this feeling. Participant 101 responded; "frustrating, broke, abandoned". Participant 94 suggests; "I go home exhausted and stressed over stupid insignificant problems. I often want to shut off my mind and I've been living a bit on auto pilot lately."

Discussion

It was the aim of the current study to investigate how well-being at work differed between self-employed and directly employed workers in creative and corporate workplaces, and in particular, for the creative self-employed. Research questions were explored via four hypotheses measuring group differences on the composite DV of "job-specific well-being" (JSWB). This DV consisted of satisfaction with work (SWWS), subjective happiness (SHS) and general health questionnaire (GHQ-12). Group inclusion was based on demographics of employment status, work domain, supervisory responsibility, and necessity/opportunity based self-employment. Additionally, the qualitative component explored respondents' feelings about their daily work. Subsequently, themes were compiled through inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

For *Hypothesis 1*, results showed a significant difference in job-specific well-being between self-employed workers in both creative and corporate workplaces when compared to their directly employed counterparts, and, therefore, supported the hypothesis. However, results for the current sample showed directly employed workers were more satisfied with their work than self-employed workers which runs counter to established research findings (Benz and Frey, 2004; Anderson, 2008; Lange, 2012). Binder and Coad (2013), for example, reported their findings 'robust'

that self-employed workers enjoyed higher job satisfaction than directly employed workers. Why current findings showt self-employed workers scoring lower on satisfaction with work than directly employed is unclear. Research suggests that self-employed workers are under high strain from commercial insecurity (Warr, 2018), and they exhibit higher overall burnout, emotional exhaustion and lack of work satisfaction than their directly employed counterparts (Jamal, 2007). The contrast between the established literature and that of the current study may highlight a weakness of questionnaire based assessment of well-being in the workplace, and provide opportunity for further investigation perhaps through employment of longitudinal designs and alternative means of assessment. Additionally of note, both self-employed and directly employed group mean scores on the SWW scale reported dissatisfaction with work. In fact, none of the groups under examination across the breadth of the study showed satisfaction with work. Finally for hypothesis 1, no statistically significant difference was observed between total self-employed and total directly employed groups on general health or subjective happiness, although, means scores on subjective happiness were below that suggested for the average person.

Hypothesis 2 examined job-specific well-being (JSWB) amongst self-employed workers with and without supervisory responsibility in both creative and corporate domains of work. It was expected that results would support current available research in this area which suggests that well-being at work amongst the self-employed is contingent upon the presence or absence of supervisory responsibility for others (Warr, 2018; Tetrick *et al.*, 2000). Warr suggests that having little or no peer support or proven and established systems of management, work satisfaction amongst self-employed workers is moderated by supervisory responsibility. However, no significant difference between groups was revealed (see Table 2.0), therefore, results did not support the hypothesis. In other words, the current study found that self-employed workers in creative and corporate domains were no more satisfied or dissatisfied with work than their directly employed counterparts based on supervisory responsibility for other workers. Notwithstanding this, results for individual measures, albeit not statistically significant, found that corporate self-employed workers without supervisory responsibility (CPSEwoSR) were more satisfied with their work and had lower probability of clinical disorder compared to other self-employed groups. Looking at creative self-employed, the CSEwoSR group were fractionally more satisfied with their work and had lower probability of psychological disorder than the CSEwSR group. Results on the SWW scale, therefore, may suggest possible support for Warr (2018). Measures of subjective happiness provided very similar results for the four groups analysed, however, group mean scores were below that indicated by the measure as normal for the average person. Additionally, self-employed workers in creative domains of work with supervisory responsibility (CSEwSR) recorded the highest probability of clinical disorder and lowest on work satisfaction. This does not support findings by Bille *et al.*, (2013) that artists enjoy higher job satisfaction than other workers. Present results may reflect the finding that artists and creatives suffer adversely from above-average unemployment and constrained underemployment (Steiner, 2017). Taking into account Steiner's view that the relationship between pay and satisfaction is weaker for artists than non-artists (Steiner, 2007), perhaps this can be accounted for by present results and would be an issue worth examining in future research.

Further exploring the second of three research questions, *Hypothesis 3* sought to investigate job-specific well-being (JSWB) differences amongst directly employed workers in creative and corporate domains with and without supervisory responsibility. Once again, it was expected that results would support previous research which suggests that workplace well-being is dependent on the presence or absence of supervisory responsibility (Warr, 2018), and directly employed workers in supervisory roles show higher job satisfaction over those who are not (Tetrick *et al*., 2000). Results showed a significant difference between groups on the composite measure of job-specific well-being and, therefore appeared to support the hypothesis and previous research. Subsequent analysis of individual measure results, however, showed that statistical differences on GH accounted for results. Similar to findings for Hypothesis 2, individual measure results showed directly employed workers in corporate domains without supervisory responsibility were higher on work satisfaction than those with supervisory responsibility and, therefore, did not support findings by Tetrick *et al*., (2000). Perhaps paradoxically, results also showed those without supervisory responsibility were higher on probability of clinical disorder than those with supervisory responsibility, and may reflect a disconnect between how respondents actually feel and how they want to feel about their work. Additionally, results for directly employed workers in creative domains without supervisory responsibility also showed higher work satisfaction, but in this case, they showed lower probability of clinical disorder than their creative counterparts with supervisory responsibility. While individual measure results do not support Warr (2018) and Tetrick *et al*., (2000), the mean score differences were small and not significant. It is worth noting that in examination of satisfaction with work, all respondent groups reported dissatisfaction with work ranging from dissatisfied to slightly dissatisfied. It is also of note that group sizes were not equal, with directly employed workers in creative domains without supervisory responsibility markedly lower in sample size (N=3) than other groups. This represents a notable limitation in the current study and future examinations of workplace wellbeing amongst creative directly employed workers should ensure adequate sample size.

Hypothesis 4 explored differences in job-specific well-being (JSWB) amongst self-employed workers in creative and corporate domains whose self-employment choice was motivated by either necessity or opportunity. That is to say, group inclusion was determined by whether self-employed workers were forced into self-employment through unemployment (for example), or they realised and pursued a commercial opportunity. Results found no statistically significant difference between groups and, therefore, did not support the hypothesis. According to research, "opportunity" entrepreneurs compared with "necessity" entrepreneurs are more satisfied with self-employment (Block and Koellinger 2009; Kautonen and Palmroos 2010). Binder and Coad (2013) suggest that those who enter self-employment through necessity experience reduced subjective happiness and general health than comparative groups. However, although not statistically significant, current results were not completely in agreement. Analysis of individual measures showed those who are creative self-employed through necessity (CSE-N) recorded higher levels of work satisfaction than the other three groups, but again perhaps paradoxically, subjective happiness and general health scores for CSE-N workers indicated lower subjective happiness and greater probability of clinical

disorder respectively, than other groups examined. As suggested for hypothesis 3, results may reflect a disconnect between how respondents actually feel and how they think they should feel about their work. Additionally, and perhaps a significant consideration in attempting to explain results, is that overconfidence biases of entrepreneurs has been found in self-report measures (Binder and Coad, 2013).

Although not investigated and compared directly, upon examination of creative self-employed and creative directly-employed workers with/without supervisory responsibility, similar scores were observed across individual measures. However, work satisfaction was higher for creative directly employed workers. Additionally, results on all measures for both creative self-employed and creative directly-employed workers were lower on satisfaction with work and subjective happiness, and higher on general health than their corporate counterparts. This perhaps reinforces the persistent cultural idea of the starving artist. Results here further support findings by Bille *et al.*, (2013) and Steiner (2007) suggesting that for creative self-employed workers whose motivation may not be outcome based, the pressures of business may weigh heavily on psychological well-being. Future research should explore self-employed and directly employed creative workers in effort to further understand these results and perhaps develop useful interventions. The examination of workplace well-being amongst self-employed and directly employed workers in creative and corporate domains offers a seldom explored comparison and represents a particular strength of the current study. Additionally, results herein question the validity of prior research as it is applied to creative groups and highlights the need for further specific investigation of the psychological well-being of creative people at work.

With regard to the qualitative component, 53% of coded responses reflected a positive relationship with work, 42% were negative and 5% were neutral and perhaps did not reflect quantitative findings. Notwithstanding this, many of the positive responses contained a caveat; "I like or I love my work, but…". There appears in responses a recognition that work contains an inherently negative aspect that perhaps cannot be avoided. But not all workers' responses reflected this. Some workers appeared to be in love with their work, to be in a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) as can be observed from respondent 176 when they reported; "I feel honoured that I get to serve other people". Does respondents' recognition of the negative aspects simply allow them to tolerate the intolerables of work even if these aspects have an adverse impact on their mental health? Is adherence to the typical workplace personality or the socially typical character of the time more important than one's well-being? Is this a wider socio-cultural problem that requires a reframing of daily work? Perhaps these questions may be considered too broad within the context of the current research, however, it can be observed from results that large numbers of individuals are unhappy in their daily work and seem to be merely getting by. Therefore, these questions are not only valid, but require urgent consideration and in-depth examination in future research. Finally in this regard, the satisfaction with work scale showed all groups scored in the dissatisfied range, and subjective happiness showed all groups were below normal for the average person. It may be argued, therefore, general health results were reasonably matched to qualitative findings.

One of the central aims of the current study was to explore job-specific well-being amongst self-employed workers compared to directly employed workers. The study wished to discover if those in creative work, be they self-employed or directly employed, were happier than their corporate counterparts. Although some results ran counter to previous research and were perhaps paradoxical, it may be possible to draw some tentative conclusions. In summary, the general findings of the current study are five-fold: (1) Self-employed workers as a whole, are less satisfied with work than directly employed workers. (2) Where supervisory responsibility exists, both self-employed and directly employed workers engaged in creative domains are generally less satisfied with work and have greater probability of psychological disorder than those in corporate domains. (3) Necessity based creative self-employed are highest on work satisfaction but paradoxically, they are lowest on general health. (4) Both self-employed and directly-employed workers, regardless of their domain of work, supervisory duties, or nature of taking up self-employment (where that applied to self-employed only), are dissatisfied with work, do not differ and are below normal levels on measures of subjective happiness. (5) A significant portion of the workforce are stressed, unhappy, and disaffected in their work. The current study, therefore, concludes that existing research pertaining to the workplace well-being of the self-employed does not accurately apply to creative self-employed workers. Furthermore, existing research pertaining to creatives and artists also does not accurately apply to creative self-employed workers.

Although the current study may be considered limited in respect to group sizes in certain cases, means and methods of data collection, and results may not be applicable to the general working population, results may be a valuable step towards understanding factors influencing workplace well-being amongst the creative self-employed. An additional strength of the current study can be observed in the platykurtic and symmetrical distribution of data highlighting the absence of outliers in the dataset. Subsequent research may benefit from a more selective means of participant selection and employment of a repeated measures design. Furthermore, a deeper examination of supervisory role, number of staff under management and extent of management experience, and the exclusion of part-time workers would aid group selection. Notwithstanding study weaknesses, where the creative self-employed are concerned, the current study has highlighted perhaps a neglected area of research within work and organisational psychology, offering counter results to respected papers on workplace well-being amongst the self-employed. Therefore, future research must be committed to examining the creative self-employed as a subgroup of self-employed in order to inform theories of work motivation and occupational choice specific to this cohort. Finally, design and application of well-being interventions in the workplace must take account of individual differences and environmental factors at play for these creative workers. Industry leaders, local politicians and small business support groups may be subsequently better equipped to assist the creative self-employed to successfully launch and grow their businesses, and subsequently support local and national economies. As such, the creative self-employed may broaden the reach of their work and contribute not just economically, but aesthetically and socially towards the overall life and well-being of themselves and others.

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Cookies 'n' Consent: an Empirical Study on the Factors Influencing Website Users' Attitudes towards Cookie Consent in the EU

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Abstract

Since the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in 2018, various firms have been found violating or circumventing the ePrivacy Directive known as the Cookie Law that lays out the cookie consent guidelines for websites. To improve the GDPR compliance rate, several conversations are going on between the EU Commission, data protection agencies, business and website owners and advertising vendors regarding their cookie policy, obtaining user consent for data collection and its usage. One of the key stakeholders, the website users, whose privacy is in question, seems to be left out of the discussions. This study aimed to understand user perception towards website cookie banners that are mandatory under GDPR, and the influence of factors like awareness of cookies, user experience, consent banner design, privacy risk, and brand trust on user's willingness to accept all cookies, to develop recommendations to improve customers' motivations to give consent. Using a quantitative approach, the primary data was collected from 132 internet users residing in the EU region through an online survey questionnaire shared in social media networks. The results showed that (i) the majority of respondents had more than moderate level of awareness about cookies, (ii) they are more likely to accept cookies for quick access or task completion, (iii) acceptance of cookies was varied across different categories of online activity and (iv) given a choice they are more likely to opt-out of third-party cookies that are widely used for targeted advertising. Since third-party cookies will be phased out in the near future and are likely to be replaced with more advanced customer tracking technologies that are harder to opt-out of, this study proposes a framework for a Consent for Advertising Directive (CAD) to go beyond the existing Cookie Law, which will improve user data protection regardless of the tracking technology used, and help brands to improve transparency about their data collection and avoid GDPR violations.
Keywords: GDPR; Data protection; Cookie consent; Online advertising; Third-party cookies; Online privacy; ePrivacy Directive.

Introduction

The study aimed to identify the factors influencing user attitudes towards website cookie consent mechanisms by studying how the website cookies are used in terms of online advertising, the design framework for the cookie consent mechanisms, how they affect online user experience, the need for cookie consent as per the GDPR

Cookie policy and what has been the impact of the ePrivacy directive in online privacy so far. The findings of the study were used to identify the gaps in current cookie consent mechanisms in terms of user experience and user privacy and suggest recommendations in existing cookie policy to be more effective in protecting user privacy.

The digital revolution in the last two decades has seen giant leaps in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), making it easier for customers to adopt online and mobile communication, and enterprises to go through a digital transformation in all their functions (Rogers, 2016). More often than not, a customer's first touchpoint with the brand is online, either through a website or an app. Good online user experience is essential in moving the customer from the consideration to the conversion stage of the customer journey (Hoban and Bucklin, 2015). As a result, the lines between traditional marketing and digital marketing have now disappeared (Poole, 2019).

In a business context, user experience can have a significant impact on the value chain of a product, service or system (Marcus, 2016). According to Porter, improving the value chain is one of the strategies through which businesses can achieve competitive advantage (Porter, 1996). The customer experience report from Forrester (Schmidt-Subramanian, 2014) estimated that improving the online customer experience from below-average to above-average will increase the additional revenue by $3 billion for wireless carriers, more than $1 billion for hotels, $262 million for insurers, and $227 million for retailers (Ross, 2014). On the other hand, poor user experience in the consumer products sector can lead to negative word of mouth, poor reviews, decreased sales and negative impact on the brand, which will also increase support and service costs and increase the need for training (Ross, 2014).

In previous studies on the impact of cookie-popups, the data was collected through automated systems and browser engines (Nouwens *et al.*, 2020). However, this study collected feedback directly from users about their perception of the cookie-popups, which yielded better insights on the customer pain points that can be helpful for companies to adopt a user-friendly approach for obtaining cookie consent. The findings of this study would be of interest to online businesses, especially for websites which are dependent on the page views, like news media websites, e-commerce websites, social media and entertainment websites (Schofield, 2018).

Theoretical perspectives
The Online Buying Persuasion (OBP) model (San and Camarero, 2009) illustrates how cognitive signals are used by brands to increase customers' satisfaction level in building customer trust towards brands. It is also found that compliance with the GDPR framework, which has Privacy by Design, End-to-End security, Transparency, Respect for the User, as its foundational principles (Kurtz, Semmann and Bã, 2018),

is likely to influence customer perception and trust towards brands which will increase the likelihood of customers transacting with a brand online.

One of the major components of online advertising is Online Behavioural Advertising (OBA). According to the research article by Boerman, Kruikemeier and Zuiderveen Borgesius, OBA is defined as

    the practice of monitoring people's online behaviour and using the collected information to show people individually targeted advertisements

By tracking different websites, the user is visiting and based on consumer interest, suitable ads would be shown on partner websites (Boerman, Kruikemeier and Zuiderveen Borgesius, 2017).

This helps advertisers to target customers, who are already interested in the product or service which makes the conversion, much more easily as they address their immediate needs for products and services (Ur *et al*., 2012). Since their inception, cookies have been a cause of concern (Cranor, Byers and Kormann, 2003), even though their usage is not a direct violation. Many websites require cookies to function properly, especially in situations where personalised website experience is provided. Cookies are used to keep track of user preference during a browsing session, adding or removing items from the cart during an online shopping session, or automatically signing in the user to their email account (Chapman and Dhillon, 2002).

Website owners use cookies termed as first-party cookies (as shown in Figure 1 as A) to track website activities of a website visitor (second party) for analytics purposes. Often, an advertising partner or Ad Vendor (third party) places additional cookies, known as the third-party cookie (as shown in Figure 1 as B) to track user behaviour even after they exit the original website through a process called cookie syncing (as shown in Figure 1 as C). These third-party cookies have been recognised as a privacy threat since their inception (McStay, 2013).
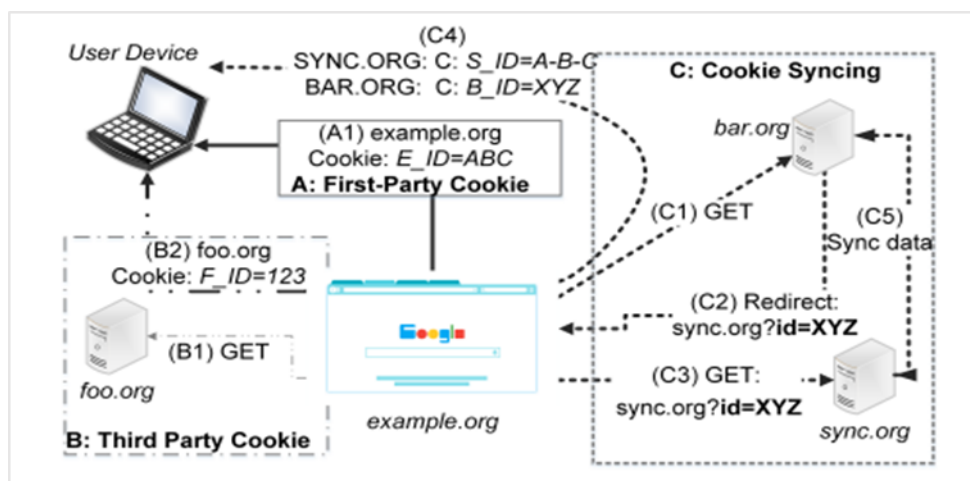
Figure 1: Different types of cookies: (A) a first party cookie - directly set by the visited website, (B) a third-party cookie - set by a third-party embedded in the website, and (C) a synchronized cookie - shared between two parties.
Source: Urban et al., 'The Unwanted Sharing Economy'

Previous studies have shown that while users like the idea of getting relevant ads, they were not comfortable with online profiling or cookie tracking. This is not necessarily because their data is being collected but mostly due to the lack of transparency of when and how much data is collected, and who has access to these data. (Ur *et al*., 2012). Other studies have also pointed out that privacy concerns damage the reputation of brands/websites and lower customer trust in them which often leads to lower usage, adoption and patronage intentions (Chellappa and Sin, 2005; Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky and Vitale, 2000; Jutla and Bodorik, 2005).

GDPR Cookie Policy
To address the privacy concerns specifically related to cookies, since 2009 the EU Commission has made it mandatory for websites to get informed consent from users accessing from the EU region, before installing cookies in their devices. Most websites have been using either a cookie banner or a pop-up to get cookie consent. A 2019 study which covered over 3.5000 websites, has found that 49% of websites are not in compliance with the EU directive and violate the cookie law as it is often referred to. 74% of websites install third party cookies before any user consent (Trevisan *et al*., 2019).

The study also indicates the various reasons from other studies for the cookies' regulatory failure, which are lack of clear opt-out options, non-standardisation implementation of ePrivacy directive among EU nations, enforcement failures, lack of awareness among users and the general public (Cofone, 2016; Leenes, 2015).

Many prominent websites argue on implied consent where, if the user ignores the cookie bar but continues to use the site, it is taken as consent from the user. Other websites do not give a choice to opt-out but merely get an acknowledgement from users that cookies are being used. A 2008 report addressed to the UK Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Justice, (Walport and Thomas, 2008) presented the difference between genuine consent and enforced consent. They explained consent cannot be passive and needs to be active. The user is required to do something to give consent; a non-response cannot be taken as genuine consent.

Following the Data Sharing Report (Walport and Thomas, 2008), the ePrivacy Directive was amended in 2009 to discipline organisations and regulate their cookie usage. The directive demanded that websites must (i) provide all its visitors with a clear description of all the parties who will be serving cookies or any other tracking mechanisms, (ii) install the cookies or other such tracking mechanisms only after obtaining explicit consent from the user, and (iii) describe how the collected information is being used.

Framework for Cookie Consent Mechanisms

To identify the factors that are likely to influence the user acceptance of cookie consent mechanisms, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) was used. Despite some reservations, TAM3 (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008), the third iteration of the Technology Acceptance Model, is used as the general framework for many studies and has been found, consistent with many studies (Stewart and Jürjens, 2018), that the factors like design, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, trust, etc. influence the adoption of new technology. Accordingly, the study aimed to examine if educating the user of the perceived usefulness of giving cookie consent and the perceived ease of use in setting cookie preferences in the cookie banner, would increase trust among users for safer online user experience.

PACT Analysis for UX Design

Systems that are designed following the PACT framework (Marcus, 2016), ensure all the PACT elements fit together seamlessly thus ensuring a delightful user experience. In general practice, there is not much evidence found if the privacy settings of a website or the cookie consent mechanism follow the PACT model or any other particular framework. The current cookie consent programs are only being added as an afterthought for GDPR compliance, and not necessarily following the Privacy by Design principles of GDPR (Cavoukian, 2010).

In September 2010, Neelia Kroes, the EU Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, called for consensus between consumer protection and commercial pragmatism. This emphasised the need for a user-friendly solution for obtaining cookie-consent, instead of using intrusive cookie pop-ups or going the other extreme of burying the cookie and privacy policy deep in the website, which is not easily accessible (Lee, 2011). The Irish Data Protection Commission (DPC) released a report in April 2020 on cookies and other tracking technologies, highlighting the presence of badly-designed, even deliberately-deceptive, cookie banners and consent management tools among prominent sites. It also shed light on dark patterns used by certain consent management platforms like Quantcast which uses cookie banner interfaces with pre-checked boxes before any action taken by the user (Data Protection Commission, 2020).

Impact of GDPR on Online Privacy

The 2019 study of four years showed the percentage of privacy violations have stayed the same, even after GDPR became enforceable in 2018 (Trevisan *et al.*, 2019). According to a Capgemini survey conducted in June 2019, fewer than 30% of global businesses were found to be GDPR compliant, one year after the enforcement of GDPR came into effect (Capgemini Research Institute, 2019). A recent study on consent management platforms which emerged after the GDPR enforcement in 2018, found that that only 11.8% of websites were fully compatible with the ePrivacy directive. In many instances, the cookie banner did not affect the installation of cookies, the privacy controls were either buried deep or unnecessarily

complicated. This shows the ineffectiveness of the cookie law and its enforcement, and the need for better approaches to protect consumer privacy.

Phil Lee, an expert in online privacy and digital regulation, in his 2011 journal article, identified seven practical measures website owners can take to mitigate risk when serving cookies for targeted advertising as a middle road to EU and Non-EU privacy policies (Lee, 2011). In line with those measures, recently in April 2020, the Irish DPC issued specific guidelines concerning cookie banners and cookie consent, which included removing pre-checked boxes, removing any nudging for cookie acceptance, very clear accept and reject options in the sliders and checkboxes and keeping the cookie preferences up to date.

On the other hand, Stephen Engberg, an expert in Security Economics, argues consent does not make sense in key areas of data protection as users are not always aware of the implications or causality of providing consent in the collection and processing of personal data (Engberg, 2015). He further states that moving to a Security by Design approach is likely to resolve consent and compliance issues which are not resolved by the current Privacy by Design approach.

Major online ad vendors and browsers have already started dealing with privacy concerns with third-party cookies. While Apple, Microsoft and Mozilla have banned third-party cookies, Google has announced that it will phase them out in the next two years (Lardinois, 2020). This is not to say they will not be tracking online behaviour. They are likely to use some other tracking technologies, and it needs to be seen if the new methods will be less intrusive and how they will impact behavioural advertising. Meanwhile, the updated version of the cookie law called the ePrivacy Regulation (ePR) is expected to replace the 2002 ePrivacy Directive, to bring in more standardisation and enforcement regarding cookie policy and obtaining cookie consent.

While the impact of GDPR cannot be denied, it is far from perfect, which is evident from the low level of compliance, weak enforcement of privacy laws and lack of awareness among customers. The major players are still opting to pay fines instead of striving for full compliance. The influence of the privacy issues in terms of user experience, data security, mitigating risk and earning customer trust is undeniable, and this means companies will have to continuously update and reframe their privacy and data protection policies.

The main research question was to find out which of the external factors shown in Figure 2 are influencing customer attitude towards cookie consent. This will help to identify factors motivating customers to give cookie consent to opt-in or opt-out of cookie usage. By studying the underlying motivations for consent, regardless of the technology or the privacy directive, brands can focus on what motivates customers to give consent and hence mitigate the risk of the volatile legality of using customer data.
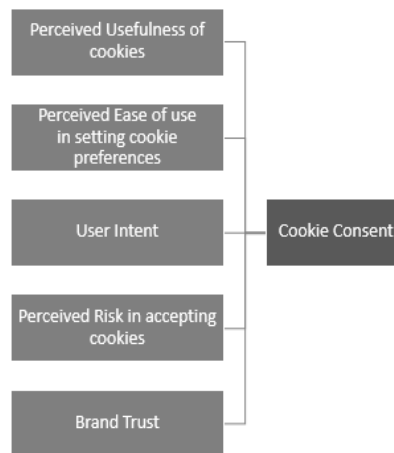
Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1 Different types of cookies: (A) a first party cookie—directly set by the visited website, (B) a third-party cookie—set by a third-party embedded in the website, and (C) a synchronized cookie—shared between two parties. Source: Urban et al., 'The Unwanted Sharing Economy'

Methodology

Sample
The study was aimed at general internet users which are considered a wide audience. Hence, the non-probability sampling method of self-selection sampling allowed the researcher to publicise the need for the study through appropriate media and invite users to respond (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The target demographic for this study was online users above the age of 18, residing in the EU region, who are likely to visit varied types of websites like news media, shopping, social networking and general interest websites, apart from their work or study-related web portals.

Design
The research model was developed by reviewing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Venkatesh and Bala, 2008), Online Buying Persuasion (OBP) (San and Camarero, 2009) and Stimulus Theoretical Framework (STF) (Lai, 2017) models. Based on the review, the correlation between independent variables like design, security, satisfaction, trust and the factors like perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, user intent, perceived risk, and brand trust on the dependent variable of cookie consent acceptance (as shown in Figure 2) were examined using the survey results.

Materials
The online questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and had 12 questions in total, 10 of which covered the research topics and were made up of a combination of close-ended, multiple-choice, Likert type and Likert scale questions as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Sample questions from the survey questionnaire

Procedure

The survey was distributed through social media channels, primarily LinkedIn and Facebook. As per GDPR, the questionnaire included the consent form, and no personally-identifiable data was collected. The only demographic detail collected was whether the respondents were residing in the European Region or from Non-EU, so that they could be filtered out. A total of 140 responses were received, including 8 Non-EU responses which were removed to form the final data set of 132 responses.

Results

This section displays the results of the survey with the appropriate charts and description of the results based on the factors (as shown in Figure 2) highlighted in the research design.

Awareness Level of Online Users about Cookies

As shown in Chart 1 below, the majority of users were only moderately aware of the functionality of cookies, their purposes and benefits as well as their risks. More respondents were extremely aware of the risks associated with cookies (21%) than the benefits of cookies for users (14%).
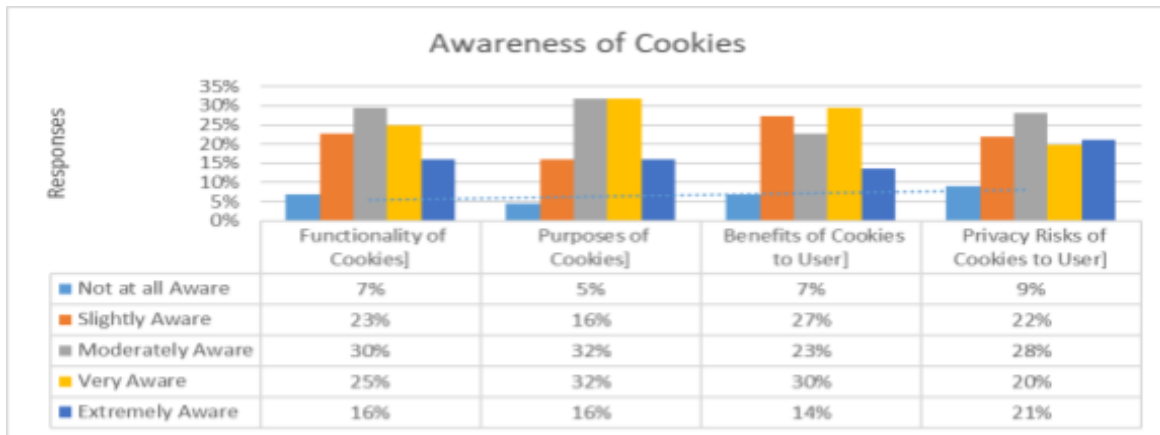
Chart 1 - Awareness of Cookies among users

Influence of Benefits of Cookies towards Cookie Consent

To find out if the user's awareness level of cookie-related benefits motivates users to give cookie consent, crosstab analysis was done between awareness level of benefits of cookies and likeliness of accepting cookies under various categories of online activity as mentioned in the survey. These were: shopping, news media, corporate info, social media, banking and finance, healthcare and education. Chart 2 below shows there is no consistency of cookie acceptance levels across categories, even among users who have stated that they are extremely aware of the benefits of cookies.
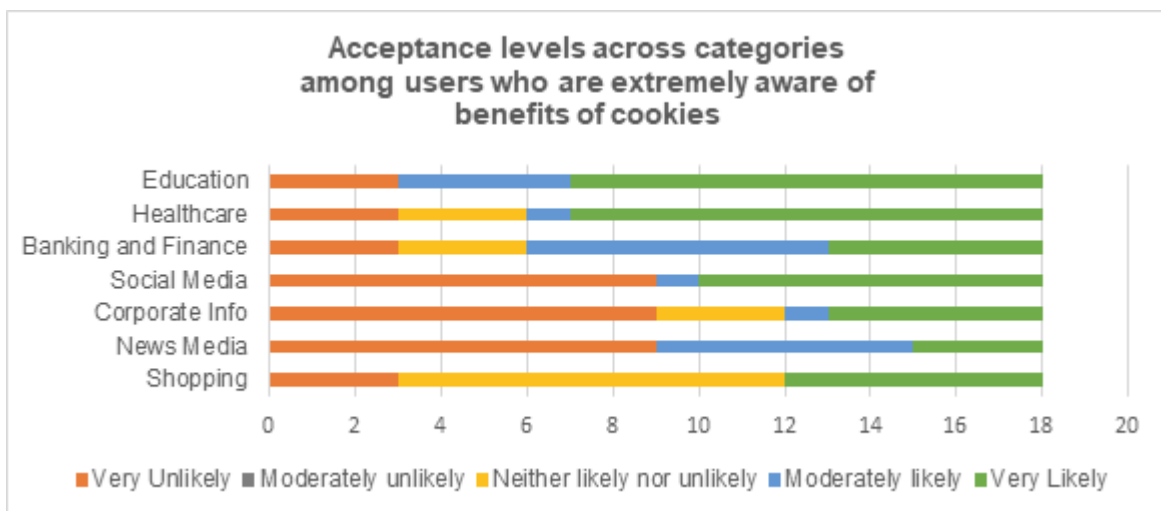
Chart 2:   Acceptance Level of Cookies among Users

Influence of User Intent Towards Cookie Consent

To examine if user intent motivates the user to give cookie consent, the acceptance level for cookies across categories was plotted together in one single chart. Chart 3 below shows that there is no consistent level of cookie acceptance across different categories of online activities, which suggests that depending on the purpose of

usage, the acceptance level changes. More than 50% (Q4) of respondents' state that they were willing to accept cookies if it is necessary to complete the task in hand.
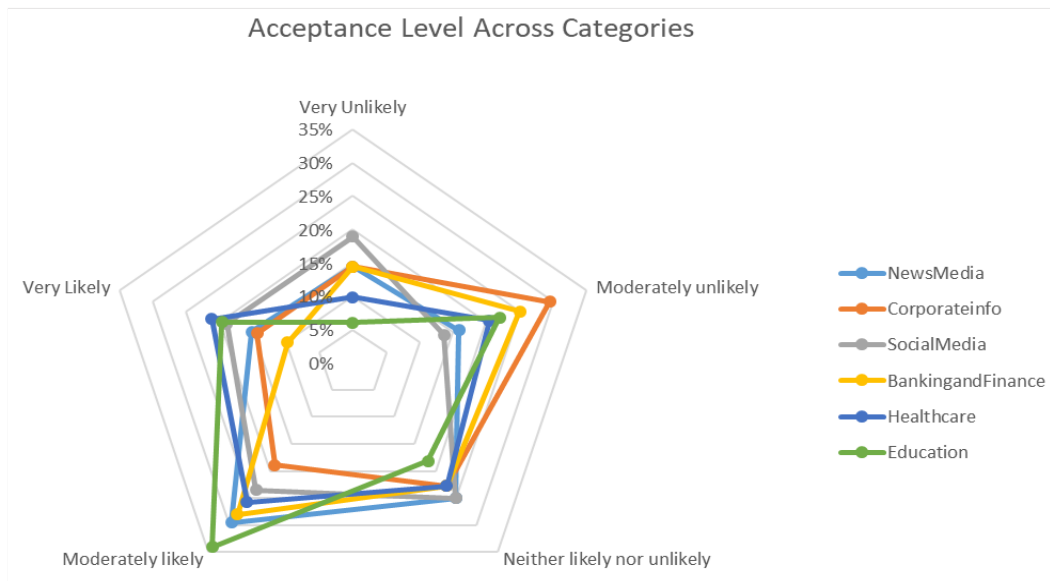
Chart 3: Acceptance Level of Cookies Across Categories

Influence of Brand Reputation towards Cookie Consent
Chart 4, below, is based on the results of a multiple-response question to ascertain the reasons that are likely to motivate the user to accept the cookies which were based on factors like brand trust, quick access, task completion, the regular user or repeat user and content quality. Brand trust and familiarity of the website came in as the third-most reason after quick access and task completion and got only about 40% of votes.
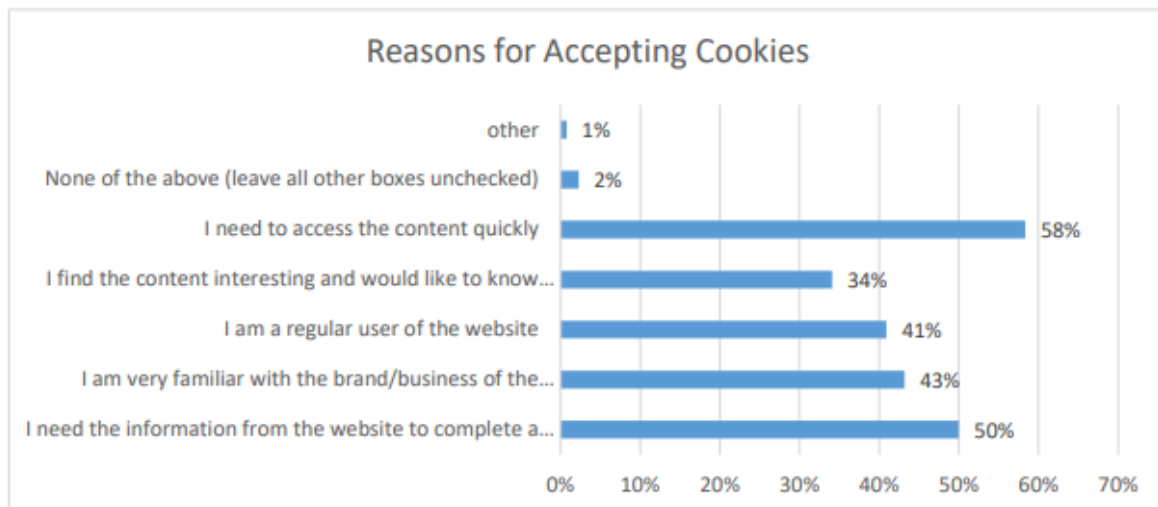
Chart 4: Reasons for Cookie Acceptance

Influence of Perceived Risk of Cookies towards Cookie Consent
Websites that deal with healthcare, finance, banking, education often called YMYL, Your Money or Your Life, websites (McCoy, 2016), often carry a higher risk rate and generally warrant more secure transactions. Chart 5, below, shows the acceptance levels across categories specifically among users who were extremely aware of the privacy risk of browser cookies. Based on the responses, there seems a considerable difference between users who are likely to accept cookies when it comes to education, healthcare and finance. If privacy risks influence cookie acceptance, then there should be a consensus when it comes to these categories as they deal with their health and finances.
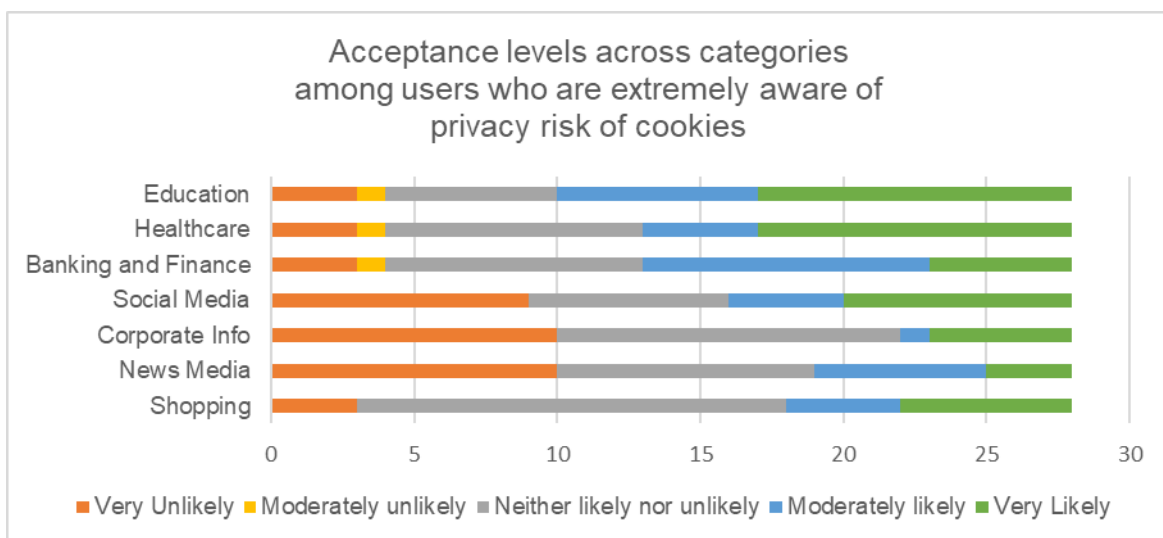
Chart 5: Acceptance Level of Cookies based on Perceived Risk by Users

Influence of User-Friendly Consent Mechanisms towards Cookie Consent
When the design preferences for the cookie banner are plotted in a radar map (refer to Chart 6), there is a clear skew towards opt-out option and managing data choices. Over 40% of respondents preferred cookie banner design with the opt-out option, followed by 31.8% of respondents preferring the option to choose how their data can be used by the website. Overall more than 88% of users wanted some level of choice in the cookie consent banner, to better manage their data choices.
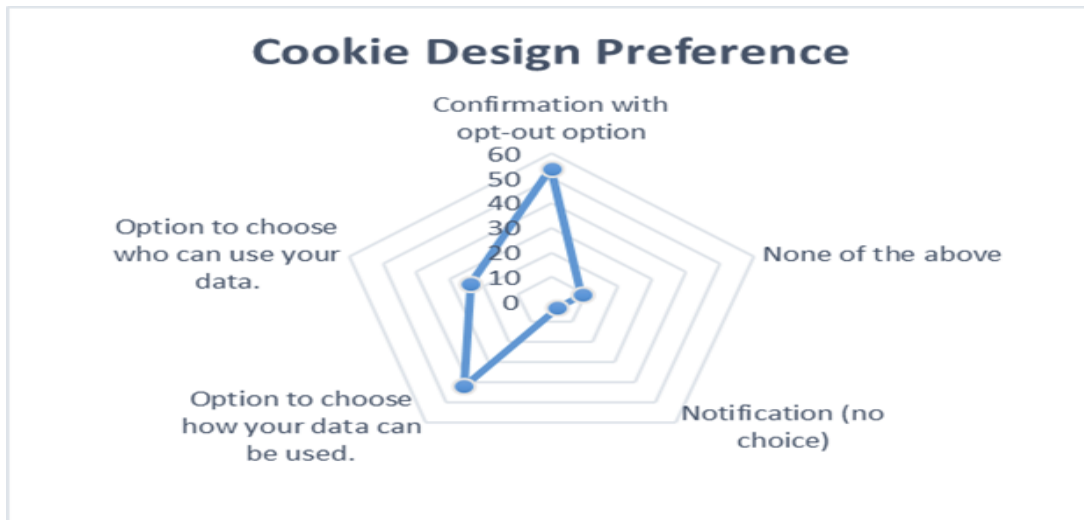
Chart 6: Cookie Design Preference among Users

The overall analysis of the survey results shows that different factors hada different type of influence on the cookie acceptance level of the users. Table1 below gives the summary of the findings on the relation between the independent variables (as per Figure 2) and the dependent variable of cookie acceptance.

Table 1: Influence of Factors on Cookie Acceptance

Objective Parameter	Influence on Cookie Acceptance	Remarks
Perceived Usefulness of Cookies	Very little or No Influence	Awareness of cookie benefits did not produce consistent acceptance levels
Perceived Ease of Use in setting Cookie Preferences	Negative Influence	A user-friendly cookie banner design is likely to increase the rate of opting out from cookies by users.
User Intent when visiting the website	Strong Influence	The purpose of visiting a website seems to play a significant role in acceptance rates which differs across different website categories
Perceived risk in accepting cookies	Very little or no Influence	No consensus among users in acceptance of high risk (e.g. Financial) and low risk (e.g. Corporate info)

Brand trust (Trust of the website owner)	Very little or No Influence	Not ranked among the important factors for cookie acceptance.

It is clear that user intent is the most influencing factor for the user to accept website cookies and given a choice, users are most likely to opt-out from accepting cookies.The other variables had very little or no influence on motivating the user for accepting cookies.

Discussion

The lack of awareness of the benefits of cookies (as shown in Chart1), raises some questions about the ideal level of awareness, and whether the users are informed enough to give consent to the cookies. Asking users to give consent without making sure if they know what they are giving consent to, is a problematic issue ethically and even legally in some cases. Website owners should take responsibility for making sure users have been presented enough information about cookies in simple and clear language on their data choices, before asking for their consent for cookie usage.

Even when users are aware of the benefits of cookies, they do not increase or decrease the acceptance rates of cookies(as shown in Chart 2). This indicates that there may be other factors like user intent, brand trust etc. which might also influence the users' cookie acceptance behaviour.

As shown in Chart 3, user intent does influence the acceptance rate of cookies, even if it's not the prime motivator. Depending on the purpose of the website and the intention of the user, the user is likely to accept or reject the cookies, given there are suitable provisions to manage their data choices.

As shown in Chart 4, the familiarity of the brand was voted as the third factor by users which impacts their decision in accepting cookies. Being a regular user of the website came in as the fourth factor influencing their cookie acceptance rate. This suggests that even if they are familiar with the brand, they may or may not accept cookies depending on the purpose of the website visit. When it comes to banking and finance, there was no consensus on the acceptance of cookies among users. It is highly unlikely that the user is carrying out a banking or financial transaction without being familiar with the website or lack of trust in the brand. So it is safe to assume, brand reputation or brand trust does not have a strong influence in convincing users to accept the cookies.

Interestingly, more users were unlikely to accept cookies when accessing a corporate website to get some general information, where the risk of privacy or security breach is very low (as shown in chart 5). Based on these patterns, it can be stated that the privacy risk of accepting cookies is not likely to influence the user to accept or reject all website cookies.

Among the various design choices given to the respondents, the majority of the users chose the cookie consent banner with a clear opt-out option (as shown in Chart 6). Users had previously cited the quick access to the website as one of the key factors in accepting cookies. However, the cookie banner with notification only design, which did not require any action from the users, and the banner design with just the 'accept' button which can be objectively quicker for users to accept cookies were among the least preferred. This indicates that users are likely to prefer a design that will help them opt out quicker, and whenever given a choice, users would rather opt-out from accepting cookies.This suggests that while a better design of a cookie consent banner has some benefits in user experience, it's not likely to increase the acceptance rate of cookies among users and most likely increase the opt-out rate of users.

Recommendations

The European Commission has been discussing stringent cookie consent laws,including standardising the language, consent banner design and accountability for managing data choices (Legroju, 2017). These changes were expected to come into effect in 2020. However,due to various delays such as BREXIT and Covid-19 crisis implementing these changes might at least take another year and an additional couple of years for it to be fully enforced.It is to be noted, advertisers are likely to move away from cookies to advanced technologies for tracking and advertising in the coming years, rendering the changes as inadequate and redundant.The cookie law and related directives seem to focus on the cookie technology itself, rather than obtaining consumer consent for using their data.

Based on the findings of this research, users simply are not interested in cookies or managing their cookie settings. Moreover, placing the burden on them to understand every aspect of the technology to give their informed opinion is unfair. The European Commission and other regulatory bodies should focus on developing a futureproof framework for targeting and advertising to website/internet users. This should help data protection agencies to keep up with the various technological advancements in the online advertising industry.

In addition to the existing cookie law, a new framework for obtaining user consent for advertising should be developed keeping the foundation principles of GDPR in mind. Such a framework will help developing directives to regulate organisations forgetting consent from users. This consent should apply to use customer data for advertising and marketing purposes regardless of the technologies they might employ to serve targeted ads.Organisations must maintain high levels of transparency of what data is being collected and the purposes they are used. They should also clearly display how users can opt-out of getting targeted ads, where possible..

Consent for Advertising Directive
To that effect, this study proposes a Consent for Advertising Directive (CAD) that can be incorporated with the current ePrivacy regulations (ePR). Figure 4, below, highlights the key points of the proposed framework to form the Consent for Advertising Directive (CAD) to increase transparency and obtain informed consent from users.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR CONSENT FOR ADVERTISING DIRECTIVE (CAD)

Regulatory Bodies (EU, Data Protection Commission and similar agencies)

• Introduce Right to Consent protocols for getting consent from users

• Standardise language and design for consent mechanisms

• Non-compliance should lead to temporary or permanent suspension of online advertising of the brand and ad vendor operations depending on the severity of the violations.

Organisations (Brands, Web Publishers and Ad Vendors)

• Include a consent policy for all types of online advertising.

• Ensure full Transparency on advertising and consent process to users.

• Ensure easy access to consent and opt-out mechanisms.

• Set-up mechanisms for users to report privacy violations easily.

• Conduct periodical audits of advertising protocols to ensure compliance

• Include ad vendor information in transparency reports for all stakeholders

• Communicate changes in consent/privacy/advertising policies to users in a clear and timely manner.

Individuals

• Be aware of individual data rights and right to consent for advertising and tracking.

• Always insist of explicit consent and clear opt-out options from web publishers.

• Report privacy violations when encountered with ads seemingly invasive or inappropriate.

Figure 4: Framework for Consent for Advertising Directive (CAD)

Table 2, below, highlights the key points of differentiation between the existing ePrivacy Directive and the proposed Consent for Advertising Directive and the possible benefits of adopting and implementing CAD.

Table 2: **Differences between existing ePrivacy Directive and proposed Consent for Advertising Directive**

ePrivacy Directive (Cookie Law)	Consent for Advertising Directive
Focuses only on usage of cookies and cookie-related consent	Focus on user consent for all types of targeted advertising
Not Future Proof as 3rd party cookies are becoming obsolete	Future Proof as CAD focuses on consent rather than technology
Violations are mainly dealt with monetary penalties for web publisher	Violations will be dealt with a temporary and permanent suspension of ad vendor in addition to monetary fines to the web publisher
Can be circumvented easily through alternate mechanisms like device fingerprinting	Circumventing will be difficult as consent mechanism is not based on the technology used by the ad vendor for ad targeting
Does not cover mobile app targeted advertising.	CAD will cover all kinds of tracking and targeted advertising regardless of device, operating system, browser or other software.

CAD will not only strengthen the effectiveness of GDPR compliance but also help brands to avoid GDPR violations as the consumer consent obtained through the framework will be applicable for all types of advertising. Brands will benefit from a robust consent policy by becoming more transparent and removing any ambiguity of what the customers are giving their consent for. Engaging with the website users with more transparency will help brands to strengthen their consumer trust by championing the data protection rights of their customers.

Conclusion

Future of Online Advertising
Segmenting and targeting of prospective customers have always been in the foundation of advertising strategy (Kotler, 1984). Online Advertising has only made targeting more granular with the use of various web and mobile technologies that has benefited marketers to offer tailor-made advertisements at an individual level. Given their enormous success, it is unlikely that advertisers will scale back their efforts in profiling users to serve them in highly targeted ads. But just like with any advertising, consumer trust with the brand is key when it comes to conversion (Hoffman, Novak and Peralta, 1999).

If a consumer develops a negative perception towards the brand on how the brand handles their user data or becomes aware of them engaging in invasive practices, then all the personalised ads will not be able to help them to recover from that. Advertisers and web technology providers should develop technologies, processes and protocols with the consumer's right to data privacy at their core so that the industry is sustainable in the long-run.

Future of Cookies Technology
There is ample evidence to suggest that the European Commission has taken great strides in regulating the data protection rights of the consumer compared to their American or Asian counterparts (GDPR.EU, 2019). Amending the e-Privacy directive implementing GDPR has had an impact on organisations taking data privacy and security more seriously. However, there is also enough evidence that organisations are treating their GDPR efforts as a compliance issue. For them, especially the tech giants, it's yet another red tape to deal with, adding to the cost of doing business, instead of implementing effective measures with the true focus on their user data protection rights (Beckett, 2020).

The case against using third party cookies, which were considered invasive since their inception is now even stronger. Tech giants like Google, Apple and Microsoft who dominate the web browser market have already announced that they are committed to phasing out these cookies (Bohn, 2020). In a few years, it is conceivable that only essential cookies are being used and individual consent for every website visit may not be required at all. But that is only half the story. Ad giants like Google have already announced new technologies like Privacy Sandbox, that helps to track, measure and serve targeted ads without using cookies (Slefo, 2020). While Google says the data will be completely anonymous, unlike cookies which are simple text files, this new age tracking software is embedded within the browser, which makes it impossible for the user to make any choices or completely opt-out. There are also more worrying concerns that ad vendors who do not have a foot on the web browser market might resort to more opaque techniques like device fingerprinting that are much more invasive and much harder to opt-out when compared to cookies.

Future of Consent
On the surface, phasing out third party website cookies seem to resolve the issue of obtaining explicit cookie consent and related complications. However, it only leaves the users more vulnerable as they no longer have any option to manage their data choices. Given the technological changes in targeted advertising, user consent for managing their data must go beyond the domain of website cookies and related issues. Users should always have their privacy rights protected and have control over the types of data being collected from them, the purposes for which the data is used for and who will access the data. In other words, User consent for tracking, measurement and targeted advertising should move beyond cookie consent. To better protect consumer rights, consent should be taken from users for using their data regardless of the technology or mechanism used by the organisation, brand, or website owner. In addition to existing consumer data protection rights like Right to Privacy and Right to be Forgotten, it's time to include Right to Consent in all future data protection regulations in its various forms around the world.

Future Studies

Based on the findings of this research, there are further opportunities to explore consumer attitudes towards personalised ads, and what are the boundaries which consumers expect brands to maintain when employing targeted advertising. It will be interesting to study if there are various degrees of consent for various types of data usage. Additionally, it can be examined what type of data is the user comfortable sharing at different stages of the customer journey.

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A Survey to Explore the Role of Organisational Justice on Organisational Citizenship Behavior among Irish Healthcare Employees

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Abstract

ORIENTATION: Organisational justice is crucial for an organisation's success and how it is perceived by employees. It develops great trust between management and employees, enhancing their job satisfaction, commitment, efficiency, and thus reduces turnover intention and improves the level of employees' citizenship behaviour.

AIM: This study is designed to determine the impact of organisational justice on job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organisational citizenship behaviour among healthcare professionals working in Ireland.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY: The selection of healthcare professionals was to add another perspective and research dimension to the currently limited research material on organisational justice and citizenship behaviour among Irish healthcare professionals. Work exhaustion and turnover intention among healthcare professionals are the major issues faced by healthcare employees and management respectively and different forms of organisational justice play a major role in attenuating these factors.

METHOD: An online survey, using validated tools, was employed to achieve the research objective. A total number of 53 healthcare personnel participated in the study by completing a questionnaire comprising organisational justice, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and organisational citizenship behaviour scales and were evaluated for their organisational citizenship in terms of altruism, sportsmanship, and courtesy.

RESULT: It has been identified from this survey that organisational justice is positively related with job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour, whereas negatively related with turnover intention among Irish healthcare professionals.

CONCLUSION: *It is concluded that organisational justice is a strong indicator of organisational citizenship behaviour among healthcare professionals and also influences job satisfaction and turnover intention moderately.*
Keywords: Organisational justice; Organisational citizenship behaviour; Irish healthcare employees.

Introduction

In today's world where organisational culture has become more commercialised and customer-focused, the healthcare industry is also facing competing challenges to provide patient-centred care with high-quality services delivered meticulously with mindfulness and deference (Kolade, Oluseye and Omotayo, 2014). There is a virtual expectation from healthcare professionals to always go above and beyond what is required of them. This is the basics of organisational citizenship behaviour previously recognised as 'Extra Role Behavior' (Organ, 2018). This attitude plays an important role in making the work environment smooth and efficient in any organisation (Hidayah and Harnoto, 2018; Romaiha *et al*., 2019), which, in the case of a healthcare organisation, can be seen in terms of high-quality care delivery (Mahooti, Vasli and Asadi, 2018.

The organisational citizenship behavior of an employee linked to any organisation is observed in the form of five attitudes, such as altruism, sportsmanship, courtesy, civic virtue, and conscientiousness (Podsakoff *et al*., 1990). However, the domains of organisational citizenship behaviour which are of major concern for healthcare professionals are courtesy, altruism, and sportsmanship. In today's world, primary care setups and healthcare organisations are under immense pressure because of multiple pitfalls. The major issue is an inability to attract and retain healthcare professionals as there is a worldwide shortage of them from top-level to bottom (Liu *et al*., 2017), especially in countries with an ageing population where demand exceeds the supply (Haddad, Annamaraju and Toney-Butler, 2019). Some of the other reasons are long working hours, shortage of qualified and trained staff, responsibility and stress level associated with the nature of the job, and inadequate remuneration for many categories of healthcare professionals, if not for all (Ali *et al*., 2019). All these factors cause resentment and job dissatisfaction among healthcare employees (Singh *et al*., 2019). Many of these factors are due to organisational injustice and failure of organisational leadership or policymakers (Aziri, 2011). Job dissatisfaction brings in other negative impacts such as no or low job commitment and increased turnover intention (Aziri, 2011; Gedif *et al*., 2018). These negative attitudes affect the organisational working environment and the efficacy and quality of service provided. The expectation of organisational citizenship behaviour from healthcare professionals in these circumstances can be said to be unrealistic. On the other hand, the culture of fairness in an organisation enhances employees' job

satisfaction, promotes knowledge sharing and innovative performance, reduces burnout and turnover intention, and encourages citizenship behaviour (Imran, 2015; Akram *et al.*, 2020).

Perception of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

According to Podsakoff there are two domains of organisational citizenship behaviour which are: interpersonal (also called 'helping behaviour') and organisational which is labelled as 'organisational compliance' (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000). The interpersonal organisational citizenship behaviour indicates voluntary helping attitude among employees, in other words, it is the relationship between coworkers both laterally and vertically in terms of communication, interpersonal trust, and teamwork (Foote and Li-Ping Tang, 2008; Asamani, 2015; Gong *et al.*, 2018). A positive interpersonal organisational citizenship behaviour has a profound effect on both the individual and organisational achievements.

On the other hand, the organisational type of citizenship behaviour is related to employees' attitudes toward the organisation and execution of roles and responsibilities assigned by the organisation. It impacts the general performance of the organisation. The attitude of employees towards the job is measured in terms of job stress, work satisfaction, job involvement, work commitment, inspiration, and a healthy and growing atmosphere among all the members of an organisation. The employees that are more satisfied with their jobs are more likely to exhibit the dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour and these attitudes are key performance indicators of employee performance (Koys, 2001). There are many positive consequences of employees' organisational citizenship behaviour on the organisation such as improved performance at all levels of hierarchy, effective allocation of limited organisational resources, reduction of unnecessary expenditures, welcoming and productive environment, cohesion among prospective and current employees, and maintaining organisational and employee performance stability (Sadeghi, Ahmadi and Yazdi, 2016).

In general, there are five types of organisational citizenship behaviour which an employee can exhibit as an extra role behaviour while performing assigned responsibilities in a work situation. These are: altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. According to social psychologists, altruism can be described as a prosocial behaviour that refers to any action that benefits other people, without any self-interest. The term conscientiousness defines a personality trait that indicates the degree to which a person is organised, dependable, committed, perseverant, and focused. Civic virtue refers to employees' participation in the activities of the organisation such as meetings and training organised by the company to keep abreast of the current standing of the organisation and also to enhance their skills. Courtesy is an attitude which means that the employees in the

organisation treat each other with respect. The working environment would be more comfortable and make things easier for the employees to work in a team. The last of the five types of organisational citizenship behaviour is sportsmanship which indicates the positive attitude of the people towards their work. They do not complain when faced with challenges in their work, instead they find solutions to come out of it by performing their level best.

According to Organ's (1988) definition of organisational citizenship behaviour, healthcare professionals might display organisational citizenship behaviour by covering shifts for colleagues who are late or sick, talking to each patient with respect and patience even with the busy, and often extremely stressful, work environment, delaying taking refreshment breaks to put the needs of patients first, actively taking part in improving rules and procedures in a healthcare setup to make them easier for both other healthcare employees or patients, helping orient new staff into the team and making them aware of rules and procedures. The healthcare profession is a profession in which the success of the organisation and the wellbeing of patients which is the utmost objective, is highly dependent on healthcare professionals going above and beyond, displaying organisational citizenship behaviour. The stress level associated with the nature of the job affects the organisational citizenship behaviour of healthcare professionals (Nabirye *et al*., 2011; Kokoroko and Sanda, 2019).

Dimensions of Organisational Justice

Organisational justice should present in all the work environments, from organisational activities to allocation of rewards, intrinsic and extrinsic and any interaction between colleagues. There is a strong impact of an organisation's philosophy on employees' attitude and emotions such as organisational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction (Castillo and Fernandez, 2017). By exploiting or manipulating these factors during policymaking and recruitment procedures, top management could have a strong command on the organisation's progress and effectivity. Organisational justice impacts directly, as well as indirectly, on employees' extra-role behaviour (Ali, 2016). There are three coincidental but well-defined domains of organisational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional.

Distributive justice is the employees' perceived fairness of distributions of rewards, both intrinsic and extrinsic such as wages, promotions, social approval, job security according to their education, training, experience, and work performance based on different philosophical ideas such as equity, equality, and need (Baldwin, 2006). The equity principle is the distribution of rewards according to the employee's input to work. In 'equality', everyone enjoys the same benefits, whereas 'need' relates to personal circumstances of the employees such as disability allowance (Steiner *et al*., 2006).

In terms of procedural justice, employees need to know why policies are in place, why certain procedures are carried out in a certain manner and why outcomes or rewards are distributed in a certain way. An organisation must keep employees fully aware of the agenda and strategy used to achieve a certain goal. The fulfilment of key attributes such as voice, transparency, fairness, clarity, and impartiality for implementation of organisational procedures is perceived as procedural justice (Cloutier *et al*., 2018). Demonstration of these principles provides evidence of the extent to which employees are valued and appreciated by their organisations and increases employees' trust, confidence, and commitment (Boe, 2019).

Interactional justice deals with fairness in informational and interpersonal tasks among employees. The perception of justice relating to any explanations that are provided, and the conveying of information such as why procedures are conducted in a certain way is called informational justice (Muzumdar, 2012), whereas dealings of all employees, from top to bottom, with one another is interpersonal justice. Organisations that depict the culture of 'hard management' by using verbal forms of aggression such as yelling at employees, talking with disrespect by layoff agents, bullying, harassing and humiliating employees, create an unfavourable working environment and impose a negative impact on the perception of justice among employees (Yahaya *et al*., 2012; Richter *et al.*, 2018). It is suggested that equitable, unbiased, and even-handed supervision reassures employees that they are valued and promotes a sense of belonging. Good working relationships are essential to the smooth functioning of an organisation (Swalhi, Zgoulli and Hofaidhllaoui, 2017). These virtues are significantly and negatively associated with emotional burnout and hence incur a positive impact on employees' and organisations' performance in general (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara and Ting-Ding, 2017; Kyei-Poku, 2019; Lee and Chui, 2019). Demonstration of interactional justice among employees is a powerful antecedent of the employee's exhibition of organisational citizenship behaviour and reduced turnover intention (Muzumdar, 2012; "Human resource practices and their association with perceived organisational support: The mediating effect of interactional justice," 2019).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted construct, one that considers feelings of employees, and also considers how intrinsic and extrinsic job elements may affect them. Job satisfaction is a feeling that appears as a result of the individual's perception of how well their job meets their needs, whether they be financial needs or psychological ones (Aziri, 2011). The intrinsic factors which can affect employees' satisfaction at work are recognition of their services, along with opportunities for personal development and promotion, whereas the extrinsic factors include job security, remuneration, workplace environment, colleagues and management

(Plumed Polo, 2016; Abuhashesh, Al-Dmour and Masa'deh, 2019; Ali *et al*., 2019). The phenomenon of job satisfaction is crucial in terms of organisational success, due to its strong impact on employees' motivation and productivity (Saifi and Shahzad, 2017). It is proven that there is a significant link between job satisfaction and performance. The higher the job satisfaction, the higher the employee's performance and job commitment will be (Susanty and Miradipta, 2013). On the other hand, dissatisfaction at work and job strain negatively impacts the employee's performance, identified in a study performed among Iranian nurses (Wazqar *et al*., 2017).

Turnover Intention

Turnover Intention is defined as ″conscious and deliberate wilfulness to leave the organisation″ (Tett and Meyer, 1993). There are many negative consequences for employees leaving the organisation such as customers' dissatisfaction, the reduction of employees' job commitment and morale, increased costs of rehiring and training (Emiroğlua, Akova and Tanrıverdi, 2015). Highly-skilled employees are especially important to organisations and losing them can be very disruptive for an organisation, especially ones that deliver services to customers. The reasons for employee turnover can be categorised as work-related, e.g. work environment, remuneration, etc., individual factors e.g. employee demographics and external factors e.g. recession, and the unemployment rate (Tian-Foreman, 2009).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Healthcare organisations range from government-funded health services, private hospitals, nursing homes, polyclinics, and solo-general practitioner services. All these healthcare organisations, irrespective of the number of employees, are based on team-oriented culture. The team usually comprises licensed healthcare professionals and non-licensed governing bodies. Justice and collaboration between the two parties play a vital role in the provision of care services to the clients. Due to the stressful nature of work done by healthcare professionals at all levels ranging from consultants, specialists, resident doctors, general practitioners, nurses, healthcare assistants and other allied medical professionals, it is mandatory for the organisation to keep fairness and justice among all workers in every aspect (Ghasi, Ogbuabor and Onodugo, 2020). This avoids unrest and reduces stress, the workers will be more satisfied with their allocated job, perform well resulting in successful outcomes, leading to reduced turnover intention (Wang *et al*., 2012; Sultana *et al*., 2019). Therefore, it is very important for healthcare organisations to create a justified environment for all those who work together towards a common goal and all the team-players should perceive this fairness to keep their morale high and achieve the level of work satisfaction. When fair treatment is given to all employees, they are more galvanised and inspired, resulting in a positive work attitude.

The selection of healthcare professionals for this research adds another perspective and research dimension to the currently limited research material on organisational justice and organisational citizenship behaviour among healthcare organisations in Ireland. This study aimed to gain more insight into the plight of healthcare professionals and to identify the extent to which both these factors, organisational justice and organisational citizenship behaviour, interact in a healthcare setting. It also addressed how organisational justice in healthcare settings can have an impact on job satisfaction and turnover intention of healthcare employees, influencing the effectiveness of the healthcare organisation. This research may be of practical value to the management in healthcare organisations and can help improve the working conditions of healthcare professionals and thus provide benefits to the healthcare industry.

Method

Research Strategy: This is a quantitative analysis of a cross-sectional survey, performed among the registered healthcare professionals working in Ireland.

Population and Sampling: The sample was working healthcare professionals, including general practitioners, doctors, nurses, and healthcare assistants working in Ireland. The snowball sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling method was adopted to reach the potential participants. The total responses collected during data collection were 53. Almost an equal number of females (n=26, 49.1%) and males (n=27, 50.1%) completed the research questionnaires. The data was analysed by using the SPSS.

By profession, 49.1% nurses (n=25) completed the research questionnaires while 28.3% were doctors or general practitioners (n=15) and 18.9% were healthcare assistants (n=10).

The age range of the participants was between 25 to 65. Half of the participants belonged to the age group 26 – 35 years (n=25). Most of our research respondents (n=29) were working around 40 – 60 hours, which is 54.7% of the total respondents. The number of participants (n=10) working over 60 hours a week were mostly doctors or general practitioners which is about 18.8%.

Data Collection: The questionnaire used for this study was formulated by selecting valid and reliable inventories from the previous work of researchers. A Google survey form was developed comprising a brief description of the survey purpose, consent form, demographics, organisational citizenship behaviour instrument with

three of its five dimensions, comprising 12 items (Podsakoff *et al*., 1990), organisational justice scale consisting of 20 items (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993), job satisfaction comprising 10 items (Goetz *et al*., 2013), and turnover intention scale comprising 6 items (Bothma and Roodt, 2013). Demographic information obtained in this study was age, sex, profession, experience, and work hours.

Three of the five dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour considered were altruism, courtesy, and sportsmanship which are of major concern for healthcare professionals and the rest were not included in the tool. There were four items for each dimension. All the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The organisational justice tool consisted of 20 items and was divided into three parts, distributive justice comprising five items, procedural justice comprising six items and interactional justice comprising nine items.

After the formulation of the questionnaire, links were sent via mail, text and through social media platforms like LinkedIn. The survey link remained open initially for four weeks and then extended for another two weeks with a reminder sent to all potential respondents to receive more responses.

Results

The descriptive and inferential analyses were performed to determine the frequencies of all variables and correlation between the variables, respectively. The variables with their mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values are mentioned in table 1. The minimum and maximum score achieved by the respective instruments are also mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies of all the Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Distributive Justice	13.28	4.67	7.00	25.00
Procedural Justice	17.01	5.78	6.00	30.00
Interactional Justice	27.07	9.25	10.00	45.00

Altruism	16.60	3.24	7.00	20.00
Courtesy	16.58	3.36	5.00	20.00
Sportsmanship	13.58	4.40	4.00	20.00
Job Satisfaction	44.37	12.38	20.00	66.00
Turnover Intention	19.18	3.94	10.00	24.00

The analysis of the relationship between gender and dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour exhibited negligible difference among male and female healthcare professionals. An independent samples t-test indicated that there was no significant difference between females (M=16.15, SD=2.98) and males (M=17.03, SD=3.48) in relation to altruism levels [t (51) =-.98, p=.327]. There was no significant difference between females (M=16.46, SD=3.91) and males (M=16.70, SD=2.81) in relation to courtesy level [t (51) = -.26, p=.796], and also no significant difference found between females (M=15.03, SD=3.20) and males (M=12.70, SD=5.12) in relation to sportsmanship level [t (51) = 1.98, p= .053]. The mean and standard deviation values for altruism, courtesy, and sportsmanship for female and male healthcare employees are mentioned in Table 2, whereas the t-value and p-value are shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Tendency of organisational citizenship behaviour in female and male respondents

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	Sex	Number (n)	Mean(M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
Altruism	Female	26	16.15	2.98
	Male	27	17.03	3.48
Courtesy	Female	26	16.46	3.91
	Male	27	16.70	2.81
Sportsmanship	Female	26	15.03	3.20
	Male	27	12.70	5.12

Table 3: Hypothetical t-test analysis of dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour

Dimensions of OCB	t-value	df	p-value
Altruism (equal variances assumed)	-.989	51	.327
Courtesy (equal variances assumed)	-.260	51	.796
Sportsmanship (equal variances assumed)	1.98	51	.053

Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to measure the strength of the association between the tested variables. A Pearson's r correlation showed that there was a weak non-significant positive relationship between distributive justice and altruism (r =.166, p=.236), courtesy (r =.131, p=.350) and sportsmanship (r =.143, p=.308). A strong significant positive relationship between procedural justice and altruism (r = .522, p< .001), courtesy (r = .477, p< .001) and a negative relationship with sportsmanship (r = -.170, p=.223) was identified among healthcare employees. There was a strong significant positive relationship between interactional justice and altruism (r =.564, p< .001), courtesy (r = -.398, p=.003). and a negative relationship with sportsmanship (r = -.196, p=.159). Hence the effects of procedural and interactional justice on the three tested dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour were identified as same. The above-mentioned Pearson's r values are shown in Table 4.

Pearson's correlation between the domains of organisational justice and job satisfaction showed that there was a weak non-significant positive relationship between distributive justice and job satisfaction (r =.195, p=.163), moderately strong significant positive relationship between procedural justice and job satisfaction (r =.356, p=.009), and the same correlation between interactional justice and job satisfaction (r =.346, p=.011). The above-mentioned Pearson's r values are shown in Table 4.

Pearson's correlation for all types of organisational justice and turnover intention showed moderate to strong negative effect on the turnover intention among healthcare professionals. Pearson's r values obtained for distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice regarding turnover intention were (r = -.588, p< .001), (r = -.306, p=.026), and (r = -.352, p=.010) respectively and shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlations between the variables

Variables	Pearson's r correlation	Correlation
Distributive justice & altruism	r =.166, p=.236	weak positive
Distributive justice & courtesy	r =.131, p=.350	Weak positive
Distributive justice & sportsmanship	r =.143, p=.308	weak positive
Distributive justice & JS	r =.195, p=.163	weak positive
Distributive justice & TI	r = -.588, p< .001	strong negative
Procedural justice & altruism	r = .522, p< .001	strong positive
Procedural justice & courtesy	r = .477, p< .001	strong positive
Procedural justice & sportsmanship	r = -.170, p=.223	negative relationship
Procedural justice & JS	r =.356, p=.009	moderate positive
Procedural justice & TI	r = -.306, p=.026	moderate negative
Interactional justice & altruism	r =.564, p< .001	strong positive
Interactional justice & courtesy	r = -.398, p=.003	strong positive
Interactional justice & sportsmanship	r = -.196, p=.159	negative relationship
Interactional justice & JS	r =.346, p=.011).	moderate positive
Interactional justice & TI	r = -.352, p=.010	moderate negative

Discussion

The results of this study shed light on critical issues for both healthcare human resource managers and policymakers. Healthcare organisations need expert and efficient employees to provide quality care services and improve in all aspects, especially in hospitals and nursing homes. The mainstay of the healthcare system should be to create a culture of justice in all forms and to supervise and manage employees effectively (Chen *et al.*, 2015). The culture of fairness in an organisation enhances employees' job satisfaction, reduces burnout and turnover intention, promotes knowledge sharing and innovative performance, and encourages citizenship behaviour (Galletta and Portoghese, 2012; Huang, You and Tsai, 2012; Imran, 2015; Brienza and Bobocel, 2017; Akram *et al.*, 2020).

It has been identified from this survey that there is an overall positive relationship between organisational justice and organisational citizenship behaviour. Nastiezaie and Jenaabadi (2016), also reported that the exhibition of organisational justice has a significant and positive correlation with organisational citizenship behaviour. On the other hand, Pekurinen *et al.* (2017) conducted a study on nurses' attitude and stated that lack of organisational justice can hurt the behaviour of nurses towards each other and can even harm patient-nurse interactions. A study was performed on Korean employees and it was found that perceived injustice during work is associated with increased risk of occupational disease and absenteeism (Min *et al.*, 2014). The other study found that lack of organisational justice led to counterproductive work behaviour among Chinese public servants (Mingzheng *et al.*, 2014). Another study conducted by a researcher outlined that procedural injustice is the lead motivator for deviant behaviour in the workplace (Michel and Hargis, 2017).

This study found that there is a weak relationship between distributive justice and the three tested dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour, altruism, courtesy, and sportsmanship. This challenges previous studies that proved that distributive justice is a strong predictor of organisational citizenship behaviour (Tremblay *et al.*, 2010; Yaghoubi, Afshar and Javadi, 2012; Biswas, Varma and Ramaswami, 2013).

According to the results, procedural justice is strongly correlated with altruism and courtesy, which is in line with prior studies that identified procedural justice as an important indicator of organisational citizenship behaviour (Pan *et al.*, 2018). Our results show a negative correlation between procedural justice and sportsmanship. This is in line with research conducted by Wan (2015), who found that the perception of procedural justice in employees had negative correlations with courtesy and sportsmanship. Both these results challenge prior studies which find that there is a positive relationship between procedural justice and the domains of organisational citizenship behaviour (Charles, 2016).

The study also reaffirmed that interactional justice is a strong indicator of organisational citizenship behaviour. The results are consistent with other research that found that interactional justice is significantly related to organisational citizenship

behaviour (Wan, 2015; Özbek, Yoldash and Tang, 2016). However, once again, interactional justice is found to be negatively correlated to sportsmanship.

This study concluded that there is a moderate positive relationship between all divisions of organisational justice and job satisfaction. Procedural justice had the most influence followed by interactional justice and then distributive justice. This is consistent with previous research which proves that perception of justice in organisations affects job satisfaction (Haar and Spell, 2009; Dundar and Tabancali, 2012). According to some researchers, procedural justice has a stronger influence than distributive justice on job satisfaction (Ahmadzadeh Mashinchi *et al.*, 2012). This study reaffirms this view.

As for the relationship between organisational justice and turnover intention, it was found that the perception of justice in organisations will lead to a decrease in turnover intention. In this research, distributive justice was found to have a very strong significant negative effect on turnover intention. Procedural justice and interactional justice also had a moderately significant negative effect on turnover intention. The findings of this study are consistent with work done by other prominent researchers who found that all three types of organisational justice have significant effects on the turnover intention of employees. (Öztürk, Ass and Bedük, 2016; Tourani *et al.*, 2016; Tsai, Wu and Chen, 2017; Jilani, 2020; Mengstie, 2020).

The opinion about gender groups displaying organisational citizenship behaviour is controversial. In this survey, it has been found that there is no significant relationship between gender and dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour, which is supported by another researcher (Irmawati and Bekti Retnawati, 2018). However, some researchers have found that men tend to display some of the dimensions of organisational citizenship behaviour such as civic virtue, courtesy and sportsmanship more than their women counterparts (Punia and Shyam, 2017). Another study performed among Chinese employees reported that men exhibit more organisational citizenship behaviour than women across all the dimensions (Gao, 2020).

Limitations of this Research

This study aimed to include more than 100 healthcare professionals working across Ireland but only 50 survey questionnaires were completed by healthcare professionals. This group was difficult to gather data from as healthcare professionals have many commitments and often cannot find time to take part in research or other activities. The respondents varied greatly in terms of their nature of work and general working situations which may have caused ambiguity in the interpretation of the results. Additionally, there may be other factors or relationships affecting variables and this may affect results. Results cannot be generalised to any subgroup of health professionals. This study did not consider any work-related attitudes that could have affected job satisfaction, organisational citizenship

behaviour, perception of organisational justice, and turnover intention. Causal analysis of organisational justice could not be determined as this was a transverse study. Additionally, organisational justice and organisational citizenship behaviour are subjective measures in this study so it should be taken into consideration that the responses are not a true representation of the employees' attitude.

Recommendations and Further Research

Research on a large scale is required with the collaboration of public and private healthcare regulatory bodies to evaluate and identify the driving forces for organisational citizenship behaviour and turnover intention among Irish healthcare employees. Organisations should provide adequate training for management to enhance specialist and interpersonal skills. These skills will improve relationships between healthcare professionals and their management. It is crucial in resolving a conflict between staff and management and thus improve the overall performance of healthcare organisations and professionals.

Conclusion

Healthcare organisations are some of the most complex organisations both in terms of hierarchy and delivery of service. Employee JS and organisational citizenship behaviour is crucial to the success of such organisations as the services are related to human care. There is a lot of stress due to the nature of the job and the responsibility on employees' shoulders for efficient and effective delivery of service, keeping the quality high and maximum. However, even then, it seems that not much consideration is given to facilitate the virtues of organisational citizenship behaviour and its determinants in the healthcare industry. Based on this study it can be concluded that organisational justice is a strong indicator of organisational citizenship behaviour which in turn influences the quality-of-care delivery and efficiency of care providers by enhancing job satisfaction, job commitment, personal motivation and simultaneously minimising job stress, burnout, and turnover intention.

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"The players last year all had part-time jobs": Challenges, expectations and use of social media under the professional structure of the Women's Super League

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of social media, specifically Twitter, in two English football clubs during their first season under the professional structure of the WSL. The study uses data from the clubs' Twitter accounts and interviews with key employees. A total of 1088 tweets were analysed. Four themes emerged: player availability; status; cooperation and social media strategy. The findings showed that while women's football has made great strides, the increased use of social media by players has not been supported by proper media training. Furthermore, the increase in status has not been matched by better funding. It is important that the increased awareness surrounding women's football is matched by an increase in player well-being as this will impact the standing of women's football.
Keywords: Soccer; Football; Professional sports; Social media; Women's sports.

Introduction

In 1921 the Football Association (FA), the governing body of football in England, prohibited women from using grounds associated with the organisation. This was a terrible blow for women's football that until then had enjoyed fairly high levels of popularity post World War I. Nowadays, approximately 50 years since the FA lifted this ban (1971), there has been significant progress in improving the visibility of women's football within England. The England Lionesses' semi-final against the

United States at the recent 2019 Women's World Cup drew a record-breaking audience of 11.7 million viewers and became the most watched British television broadcast of the year (Waterson, 2019). Not only have strides been made in terms of interest and viewing figures, but also in England the domestic game has seen the Women's Super League (WSL), the elite level women's football league, become professional. However, while this has enabled some players to earn a living and make a career, problems still exist between the growing professionalisation of women's football and the precarious work conditions in which players operate (Culvin, 2019). Previous research shows that football has always been highly precarious and unpredictable as a career (Parker, 2000; McGillivray and McIntosh, 2006; Roderick, 2006; Wood et al., 2017). This is further exacerbated in women's football. Women are unprepared and unsupported for their new highly gendered careers as professional footballers. The roles, remits and expectations placed on players are increasingly complex and dynamic with little training or support offered to manage these changes (Culvin, 2019).

The increased ubiquity of social media has placed additional expectations on players. For example, an increased pressure to portray a certain image, be a role model, and an increased blurring of their personal and professional lives. Specifically, in women's football, high exposure on social media has resulted in strong accountability and surveillance on their bodies and lives. The vulnerabilities experienced by women are multifaceted and unexpected, eating and bodily disorders, work spillover and overtraining, with little guidance from managers or clubs on how to deal with these new pressures (Culvin, 2019). Football clubs place a strong emphasis on social media as a marketing tool where the focus is on developing the player as a brand and increasing the engagement between players and fans. There is little evidence of clubs proving media training in a way that does not turn women players into commodities.

In recent years there has been an increased interest in examining women's sports and social media communication. Recent research on the use of social media and women's sports has focus on the use of sexist and tone-deaf themes by sports' governing bodies (Grace and Muller, 2019), on how specific social media platforms influence women football fans interactions (Kunert, 2021), and the marginalisation experienced by women as sports fans (Gosling, 2007; Pope, 2017; Toffoletti and Mewett, 2012). For example, Schultz and Linden (2014) demonstrated that women were only welcome as spectators to American sports under strict conditions—either as moral agents to calm down the unruly men or as consumers filling up the stands. However, with the exception of Culvin (2019) there is to date little research on the expectations and use of social media, specifically Twitter, by professional women's football club teams. We propose to fill this gap by exploring the expectations and use of social media in two English football clubs during their first season under the new professional structure of the WSL.

Social media and the football industry and its use within the WSL

The rapid growth of social media has transformed how organisations, including the sport industry, communicate with consumers (Belch and Belch, 2017). Social media

has been defined as 'new media technologies facilitating interactivity and co-creation that allow for the development and sharing of user-generated content among and between organisations and individuals' (Filo et al. 2015, p.167). Created in 2006, Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging tool that restricts the length of the message (tweet) to a maximum of 280 characters. Tweets are displayed on an individual's profile page and on the home page of each of their 'followers' (those who track the individuals' activity). Individuals can select to follow other Twitter users and view their shared posts and photos, effectively creating an audience for this content. Users who access the platform view a real-time rolling feed of messages posted by everyone they follow (Price et al., 2013). Twitter had a reported 321 million monthly users in 2019 (Shaban, 2019).

An effective social media strategy can increase the accessibility of sports that struggle to compete in the saturated sports market and are ignored by mainstream outlets (Clavio and Klan, 2010). The FA's vision for the WSL centred around constructing an identity for women's football that was distinct from the men's game. Social media was seen as an essential tool to support them in achieving a modern and distinct identity (Fielding-Lloyd et al., 2018). To achieve this the FA sought to market the WSL as a family friendly 'product' to fans who were parents to 10-15-year-old children and to young girls who play football in schools and clubs. However, this narrowly defined target segment risked overlooking the existing audience of adult female players and older men (Fielding-Lloyd et al., 2018).

Digital media platforms have been described as 'a challenge to the hegemony of television, which can be alternatively bypassed, undercut, and complemented by online media' (Hutchins and Rowe, 2012 p.5). Social media can increase the visibility of the WSL as the lack of profile of women's football is driving fans to social networks for their news. On social media, fans are being 'up to seven times more interactive than fans of the men's game' (FA, 2012 as cited in Fielding-Lloyd et al, 2018). Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016) report that women athletes' use social media more frequently than men and see social media as a way to promote themselves and create work opportunities.

However, some critics see football clubs' embrace of social media as evidence of an increased commodification of football (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2016), for example the FA using the services of Wharton Consulting to develop their social media strategy. This new business model is dominated by global markets, profit maximisation, players as brands, and fans as customers. The growth of women's football has emerged alongside the hypercompetitive culture of men's football. Some scholars have suggested that women's football is suffering from the more negative aspects of men's football (Dunn, 2016) and reaping few of the rewards. While social media provides a more direct communication among fans and players, it can also offer fans ' unprecedented access to athletes' and their personal lives (Hambrick et al., 2010 p.455). While this level of access lets fans connect and feel closer to athletes (Pegoraro, 2013), some athletes feel pressure to showcase their personal life, creating a false sense of intimacy between fans and players. Social media helps players to build their brand, however, many times this brand is manufactured within a

hyper-sexualised culture with largely men agents advising women athletes (Culvin, 2019).

Research conducted by the FA highlighted that despite being the third-largest team sport in the UK, women's football lacked widespread recognition outside of major international tournaments. Lessons learned from the USA, highlighted the need for clubs to use social media and make players more accessible, something that is not required from men footballers. The increased use of social media prompted 'the digital ambassador initiative' launched at the start of the second season of the WSL (Dunn and Welford, 2015). The players selected as ambassadors were at the forefront of the club's engagement with the public. It was the first time that elite athletes in the UK wore their Twitter handles on their jerseys (BBC Sport, 2012). While Twitter does increase interactions between players and fans (Kassing and Sanderson, 2010), the value of this initiative to increase interest in the sport is questionable. Research shows that Twitter feeds of individual players predominantly feature content that revolves around their everyday lives and relatively few tweets that focus on their sports or teams (Hambrick, et al., 2010). Social media therefore, can further objectify female athletes by putting the focus on their private lives and away from their achievements as elite athletes. Moreover, the digital ambassador programme requires players to be present and active on social media, which leaves them open to online abuse, which is not uncommon on social media platforms (Parry et al., 2015).

The desire to increase the connectivity between WSL players and fans through initiatives such as the digital ambassador was driven by the goal of increasing attendance to games. However, as it is common on social media, the information on WSL's Twitter account is available only to those who actively seek it. Therefore it is not a very effective tool to reach new audiences or expand their fanbase (Fielding-Lloyd et al., 2018). Furthermore, while increased connectivity between players and fans has its benefits, it also has its downsides, such as when players fail to conform to the values of their club, or encounter official messages from their club or sponsors. One ill-advised Tweet can stir up unnecessary controversy (Newman et al., 2013). Also, social media enables fans to share their opinion online, taking some of the control over the message away from the sport organisation. The potential for negative feedback has resulted in many football clubs being reluctant to allow supporters' comments on their official website (McCarthy et al., 2014).

Materials and Methods

The study adopted an exploratory approach, based on the case study of two football clubs in England. It aimed to explore these clubs' expectations and challenges of the use of media to promote the clubs. Creswell defined a case study as an exploration of a bounded system through detailed, in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2007). Case-study methodology is commonly used in football-related marketing studies (McCarthy et al., 2014). In this research, two in-depth interviews with key employees of the clubs were conducted; the interviews were contextualised with a content analysis of the clubs' Twitter accounts. Twitter in particular is used by athletes, sports

teams and sports media outlets to provide updates on individual athletes, sporting clubs, sporting leagues and organisations and to report the results of sporting events as they happen (Litchfield and Kavanagh, 2018). In case studies, the data is strengthened through the analysis of multiple sources of evidence (Barrick, Mair and Potwarka, 2017). In this case the triangulation of the data led to particularly enriching insights about the participants and surrounding context of women football in England. As the various insights from the data analysis process emerged, nuanced and layered findings were uncovered (Yin, 2009). It allowed us to bring together multiple data sources to both enhance the credibility of the research and synthesize the findings, while also helping to clarify the research meanings (Barrick, et al, 2016). Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the University under permissions outlined in the Further Exploration of the Process of Seeking Ethics Approval for Research, Human Research Ethics Committee Document No: 7.

Initial contact was made by the first author to the Women's Football Marketing Manager at the FA who facilitated contact with the eleven clubs in the WSL. Club A represents one of the original clubs from the WSL inaugural season and who have successfully maintained their inclusion within the league since. In contrast, Club B represents a club competing in their first season as part of the WSL. Both clubs are financially backed by the parent men's club. This sample was selected as the varying experience level of both clubs within the WSL can provide insights into how clubs use social media in the league's first season as a full-time professional entity.

Table 1: Clubs' characteristics

Example of table/picture	Club A	Club B
Active on Twitter since	2011	2009
Professional since	2017	2018
Date joined the WSL	2011	2018

Content Analysis

Using an online tool Vicinitas, all public tweets were downloaded for both WSL teams for two separate periods. The first being, March 26th 2018 to May 21st 2018, which represented the final weeks of the 2017/18 WLS season. This was the last season before the league became entirely professional. The second period was the final weeks of the 2018/19 season between March 11th 2019 and May 13th 2019. This period corresponds to the last weeks of the first season of the league being professional. All data was downloaded to an excel spreadsheet. A six-step content analysis approach, adapted from previous research (Gibbs, O'Reilly and Brunette, 2014) was followed (See Table 2).

A total of 1088 tweets, covering the two time periods were analysed. A review of the Twitter accounts indicates that both clubs were very active during these periods. Club A has a separate profile for the women's team. Whereas, Club B integrated

content within the main club's Twitter account shared by all teams playing under the club brand. Tweets were analysed and assessed based on the content, structure and the general nature of the tweet. Each tweet was coded into a category and then a subcategory. Many of the tweets could have been categorised in more than one category. However, a decision was made to categorise the tweet in the most relevant category based on the actual content of the tweet. For example, many of the tweets contained a picture or a video, yet not in all cases these provided new information. The image or video was used to enhance the tweet. Based on the initial analysis, five categories were identified: in-game, news, promotion, interactive and other. The in-game category represented any tweets that happened during a game. Such tweets typically provided information such as score updates and substitutes. The news category consisted of tweets that provided fans with information related to the club. The promotion category consisted of tweets of the marketing variety and typically centred around the promotion of game and ticket sales. The final category labelled other, included tweets that did not fit into any of the above categories (See Table 3).

Table 2: Six-Step Content Analysis Approach

Stage	Process
1. Defining the problem	To explore how WSL clubs use social media for marketing and promotion
2. Selecting the media and sample	Tweets from the official Twitter feed from two clubs in the WSL
3. Defining analytical categories	Identified categories based on literature, interviews with team personnel and researchers experience: in-game, news, promotion, interactive, and other
4. Constructing a coding schedule	Develop Tweet-coding schedule
5. Piloting the coding schedule and checking reliability	Executing of the coding
6. Data preparation and analysis	Preparation of the data in an excel template

Adapted from Gibbs et al (2014)

Table 3: Initial Tweet Coding

Tweet Coding	Category	Explanation
Score updates, substitutes, examples of good play	In Game	Tweets composed during games that report what is happening during the game.
Coach/player interviews, squad updates, video/photo sharing, postgame, upcoming games	News	Tweeting a video/photo, squad updates (transfer, injuries), player/coach interviews postgame news etc.
Ticket sales, sponsors, merchandise, game advertisements	Promotion	Promoting games, ticket sales, merchandise.
Direct Communication/Retweets	Interactive	Retweet fans/WSL account/main club, communication with fans
Other	Other	Any that does not fit into any of the other categories.

Adapted from Gibbs et al (2014)

Interviews

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author between May and June 2019. First, a joint interview with a marketing assistant and the social media executive from Club A and second, with a marketing executive from Club B. Semi-structured interviews enable participants to discuss their own experiences and elaborate on any areas of particular interest (Jones, 2015). Interviews lasted approximately 50-90 minutes; no participants are identified by name. All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Firstly, the data was open coded, allowing the voices of the participants to emerge and then revisited to identify broader categories and developing themes (Bryman, 2012). Four themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts: 1) player availability 2) status 3) cooperation and 4) social media strategy.

Limitations

While the rigorousness of the methodology employed assures the reliability of the data gathered, this study does have limitations. The findings should be understood in the context of the two clubs in the WSL, as a result, the views represented in this paper provide only an insight into the overall trends of how the professionalisation of the WSL impacted the club's use of social media. Interviews were conducted with clubs' staff and a content analysis of their official Twitter pages was performed. The

views and Twitter accounts of the players were not part of the study. This was due to a range of factors, mainly the difficulty in accessing players and limited resources. Such information would have provided valuable insights. We recommend that further research be carried out with an exclusive focus on players' views on the role of social media within the WSL. Furthermore, the research was conducted at the end of the first season of the fully professional structure of the WSL. It is still challenging to fully understand what effect social media marketing will have on professional women's clubs in the long term.

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the use of social media within the context of the professionalisation of the WSL, with particular emphasis on Twitter. Twitter was identified by both clubs as their primary platform for their social media communications. Four themes emerged from the interview transcripts; these were: 1) player availability 2) status 3) cooperation and 4) social media strategy. First, both clubs highlighted that the WSL transitioning to entirely professional had increased the availability of the players to participate in the creation of content for social media. However, there was little evidence of extra support or training provided to athletes to deal with this new role and expectations. Second, both Club A and B commented that the status of women's football within the parent club had increased after the professionalisation of the league but this had not necessarily been matched by a bigger budget or resources. Third, both clubs commented that professionalism brought an increased level of cooperation between the clubs and the FA. Particular reference was made to media resources provided by the FA and how this could be leveraged with the use of social media. Finally, both Club A and B admitted that the first professional season had been very much a learning period for the staff involved with marketing the team on social media. Both highlighted areas of their social media marketing strategy where they felt improvements could be made.

Club A

As illustrated in Table 4, the in-game category represented 55% (N=189) of the tweets shared by Club A in the 2017/18 season while this percentage decreased to 33% (N=128) of tweets shared for the 2018/19. While this is surprising it can be attributed to a higher number of games played during the 2017/18 period (7 games) compared to the 2018/19 period (4 games). The news category represented 32% (N=110) of Club A's tweets in the 2017/18 season. This percentage increased by 5% to 37% (N=143) of the total tweets for the 2018/19 season. The promotion category saw a small decrease from 6% (N=21) in the 2017/18 season to 5% (N=20) in the 2018/19 season. The interactive category saw an increase from 6% (N=21) in the 2017/18 season to 22% (N=85) in 2018/19. 35% (N=30) of the 85 tweets in this category in the 2018/19 season were retweets from the main club account and were primarily of the promotional variety. The other category represented 1% (N=2) and 3% (N=10) of tweets shared for the 2017/18 and the 2018/19 season, respectively.

Club B

Table 4 also shows that the in-game category represented 38% (N=67) of the tweets shared by Club B in the 2017/18 season. Like Club A, this percentage also decreased to 30% (N=55) of tweets shared for 2018/19. Club B also played fewer games over the eight-week period in 2018/19 (4 games) compared to a similar period in the 2017/18 (6 games). The news categories represented 33% (N=57) of Club B's tweets in 2017/18. However, this category saw a 10% increase to 43% (N=79) in the 2018/19 season. The promotion category also saw a rise, it increased from 7% (N=13) in the 2017/18 season to 13% (N=24) in the 2018/19 season. The interactive category saw a decrease from 20% (N=34) in the 2017/18 season to 10% (N=19) in 2018/19. The other category represented 2% (N=3) and 4% (N=8) of tweets shared for the 2017/18 and the 2018/19 season respectively.

Table 4: Initial Tweet Categories

Stage	Club A		Club B	
	2017/18	**2018/19**	**2017/18**	**2018/19**
In Game	189 (55%)	128 (33%)	67 (38%)	55 (30%)
News	110 (32%)	143 (37%)	57 (33%)	79 (43%)
Promotion	21 (6%)	20 (5%)	13 (7%)	24 (13%)
Interactive	21 (6%)	85 (22%)	34 (20%)	19 (10%)
Other	2 (1%)	10 (3%)	3 (2%)	8 (4%)
Total	343	386	174	185

Table 5– Tweet Categories

Stage	Club A				Club B			
	2017/18		**2018/19**		**2017/18**		**2018/19**	
In Game								
In Game Updates	165	48%	105	-27%	54	-31%	30	16%
In Game Photo	17	-5%	13	-3%	13	-8%	11	6%
In Game Video	7	-2%	10	-3%	0	0%	14	8%
News								

Team News	12	-3%	15	-4%	3	-2%	4	2%
Video Sharing	19	-6%	37	-10%	0	0%	7	4%
Photo sharing	26	-8%	36	-9%	17	-10%	14	8%
Player/Coach	1	0%	10	-3%	12	-7%	32	17%
Postgame	16	-5%	15	-4%	10	-6%	7	4%
Upcoming Game	28	-8%	24	-6%	14	-8%	8	4%
General Cub News	8	-2%	6	-2%	1	-1%	7	4%
Promotion							
Game Promotion	7	-2%	7	-2%	5	-3%	14	8%
Poll/Vote/ Contest	6	-2%	5	-1%	0	0%	4	2%
Merchandise Promotion	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Ticket Promotion	7	-2%	8	-2%	8	-5%	6	3%
Interactive							
Player Retweet	0	0%	15	-4%	16	-9%	6	3%
Player Communication	5	-1%	13	-3%	3	-2%	4	2%
Opposition Retweet	1	0%	1	0%	5	-3%	6	3%
General Retweet	9	-3%	50	-13%	5	-3%	1	1%

Fan Communication	6	-2%	6	-2%	0	0%	1	1%
Direct Communication	0	0%	0	0%	3	-2%	1	1%
Other	2	-1%	10	-3%	3	-2%	8	4%

Discussion

Player availability: too much, too soon?

It is clear that the WSL's transition to professionalism has increased the availability of the players to the clubs. This enabled the players to support the clubs' marketing department in the development of content for social media channels and other marketing materials. Some clubs with the backing of the wealthy men's parent clubs were professional prior to it being a requirement to play in the WSLs 2018/2019 season. Prior to the league's full transition to professionalism, many players had work commitments outside of football, and this brought challenges when attempting to coordinate players participating in content creation. Club B's marketing executive highlighted the difficulties faced in the previous season, before the introduction of professionalism:

> The players last year all had part-time jobs. They all had different training hours; they'd train in the evening when we would not be in the office. Not that we couldn't go to see them. It's just that they would usually be like: 'Oh I'll have to rush off after [training]. (Marketing Executive, Club B)

This increased availability of the players stemmed from the requirement by the FA for clubs to have a minimum of 16 hours contact time with players (Garry, 2018). One interviewee stated that the players:

> …(have) got [to participate in] the training, but then they are available [for promotional and marketing activities]. It's very easy to find time to come down to the training ground and do a bit of content with them. (Marketing Executive, Club A).

The increased availability of the players for marketing activities such as social media content creation was identified as beneficial by both clubs. Club B expressed that content involving the players would '*probably be the most popular of our women's content'* (Marketing Executive, Club B). Similarly, the Social Media Manager of Club A noted that content that enables fans to '*get to know the personality of the players and get to know their backgrounds stories'* was among the most popular features on

their Twitter account. Research has shown that the perceived social connection provided by social media is an important feature for fans of women's football (Coche, 2014). At the same time, women players have expressed that they feel their public persona is out of their hands and are concerned about fans knowing their personal lives too much, highlighting the pressures and expectations women footballers experience (see Culvin, 2019).

The increased availability also enabled the players to engage with more promotional activities. As the marketing executive from Club B explained '*we launched the kit yesterday, and we had women's players at that [the launch], as they could spend the day at the kit shoot'*. Promotional activities such as kit launches can provide clubs with opportunities for significant levels of fan engagement on social media (Reynolds, 2015). It was clear in the data that clubs were hopeful that the incorporation of players into activities that garner significant coverage on social media could help increase the visibility of the team and accelerate the growth of women's sport into the mainstream media (Vann, 2014). Triangulation with the Twitter content, and in particular the increased number of tweets categorised as Player/Coach, illustrated in Table 5 supports the finding that the transition to professionalism has increased the availability of players for participation in developing content for the clubs. This was particularly evident in the case of Club B as a significant number of Tweets within the Player/Coach subcategory focused on sharing quotes from interviews or press conferences conducted with the players and the coach.

Status: More status is not necessarily matched with bigger budget

The marketing staff from both clubs noted that compared to the larger clubs (clubs backed by wealthy men's clubs), their resources would be '*quite short on numbers*' (Marketing Executive, Club B) and that they '*just don't have the budget or the resources*' (Social Media Manager, Club B). However, Club B's marketing executive expressed that the introduction of professionalism in the WSL has '*increased resources within the club*' to assist in the marketing of the women's football team. Before the introduction of this increase in resources, volunteers were required to support the club's media coverage of the women's team.

> ...before if one of our media team couldn't make a game, because they're covering the men's game then a student from the university would go out with the team to cover it...which obviously lead to inconsistency, which meant that the women's team just looked off brand within the entirety of the page (Marketing Executive, Club B).

The quote above clearly demonstrates that there is finite resource and if this is stretched, women's clubs are the first to suffer. It could be argued that women's teams are not really valued by the 'parent' club if a student is deployed, rather than a media or marketing professional. A reverse of this situation where the student is sent out with the men's team is unimageable, demonstrating that most female teams remain relatively under-resourced and below men's teams in club hierarchies. The

inconsistencies in the reporting and lack of proper budget affects the effectiveness of women's clubs' social media strategy. The slight increase in resources dedicated to the women's game in Club B since the WSL became professional was supported by an increased focus towards the women's team from the club's marketing department.

This will help to provide the consistency in communication that is vital for fan engagement (McCarthy et al., 2014) and can assist the clubs in meeting the FA target of doubling attendance by 2020 (Garry and Aloia, 2016). There is now '*more time allowed to it, as well as the increased productivity that comes with that*' (Marketing Executive, Club B). In contrast, Club A noted that while the staffing resources dedicated to the women's department did not necessarily increase, '*they have grown in terms of stature within the club*' (Social Media Manager, Club A). The increased status of the women's department within the club has meant that the women's team is now viewed as '*an integral part of the club, just as much as the men's team*' (Marketing Executive, Club A). A view that is shared by recent media coverage, who suggested that women's football is flourishing and on the verge of becoming mainstream (Edwards, 2018).

While both Club A and Club B acknowledge the status of women's football has improved within their clubs, a closer look shows that in reality women's football still continues to struggle globally. As discussed earlier on, recent studies highlight that many domestic women's football leagues are plagued with financial instability and seasons are not long enough to provide adequate playing opportunities (FIFpro, 2020a).

Cooperation between Clubs and FA

A common trend that emerged from both clubs was that the WSL's transition to professionalism has brought an increased level of cooperation between the clubs and the FA. Particular reference was made to the increased media support from the FA. The broadcast rights to the games, negotiated by the FA has resulted in the games being available on a variety of platforms, including the WLS's own Facebook page (The FA, n.d). Moreover, clubs are also provided with the footage recorded by the FA. This has increased the opportunities to create shareable content for their social media platforms.

> So, every one of our matches in the League is filmed by the FA, and they give us that package to use. We can clip it up, show highlights or good pieces of play, celebration shots or something like that, which you can then transfer onto social media… [and then say to our fans]: 'Did you see this… [during the] weekend? It was really good' …and get traction that way, which hopefully then is picked up by the FA WSL site and other pages as well (Marketing Executive, Club B).

The current level of television coverage afforded to women's football is only a relatively recent occurrence (Baxter, 2019; Magowan, 2019). Highlight reels such as those available in men's football would previously have been difficult to produce

within women's football. The increased level of coverage of women's game and the sharing of the game footage has enabled clubs to utilise this *'to build up archives and highlights against certain teams and then you can share that in the build-up to games'* (Social Media Manager, Club A). For clubs this content can help ease the burden on marketing staff and provide significant benefits as these visuals (pictures and videos) on social media can provide greater opportunities for fan engagement (Clavio and Klan, 2010). Understanding the nature of fan engagement on their social media platforms is important for clubs, as there is a positive relationship between social media engagement and attendance to matches (Suresh, 2015). The Twitter content and in particular the Video Sharing subcategory shown in Table 5 highlight that the level of video output from the clubs has increased in the year after the WSL went professional.

Social Media Strategy: players as commodities?

Unlike the well-established men's football industry, professional women's football is still very much in its infancy, with many clubs only now entering the domain of full-time professional sports. As acknowledged by the marketing executive from Club B *'there's staff still learning new things and they still want to find out what works best'*. The marketing executive from Club B accepted that their video content is an aspect of their social media strategy that could be improved as '*[we] didn't do as much as we should have or could have'.* Furthermore, it was recognised that there was a need to produce *'quirkier videos'* that will *'tell the story of the player'* which would allow fans to identify with players. Previous studies show that this connection with players is very important to women's football fans (Coche, 2014).

Both clubs recognised that access to the women's players is easier compared to the men's players so *'[the fans] can develop such relationships with the players on a personal level that you can't really do with the men's'* (Marketing Executive, Club A). This has been attributed to the fact that women's players '*know what it's like to have a normal life*' so they are very eager to *'try new things and be the professional footballer'* (Marketing Executive, Club B). The players have *'all faced adversity to play women's football'*, and they all realise they *'are a role model'* to the next generation of female players and they want to be able to inspire them (Marketing Executive, Club A). However, while these women may be working hard to improve their game and take advantage of their increased media profile to promote football to girls and young women, if they are to have a real impact, they need to be supported by the actions of clubs and by the game's governing bodies (Dunn, 2016). These supports include financial investment from the grass roots upwards, and consistent media coverage across outlets, enabling people to see the players in action.

The marketing executive from Club A also identified areas where improvements could be made and stated that they would '*quite like to develop our tone of voice a little bit more'*. Recognising this as an area for improvement can prove to be beneficial, as achieving the right tone of voice is essential for effective fan engagement (Achen, Lebel and Clavio, 2017). As the clubs prepared for their second

season in the professional WSL, Club B recognised that it was necessary to have a '*more robust content plan in place*' as not all the plans that were envisioned for the 2018/19 season came to fruition as '*gradually other things cropped up and got in the way*' and perhaps having a more '*month by month [plan]*' *would help them achieve the goals*' (Marketing Executive, Club A). Furthermore, the timing of the social media post was emphasised as being important for increasing clubs' visibility by being '*[clever] on, when you post, how you post and what sort of format [you] want to post it on*' (Marketing Executive, Club B). Understanding this and ensuring to keep the posts relevant to the fans is important as generally fans do not appreciate content that is overtly commercial in nature (Parganas and Anagnostopoulos, 2015). Such posts can be irritating and invasive to fans who consider social media to be their space (McCarthy et al., 2014).

Brands all over the world are beginning to recognise the commercial potential of women's football (Nielsen Sports, 2019). However, for both clubs in this study, exploring commercialisation opportunities through social media was '*more focused on the men's side of things*' (Social Media Manager, Club A). This was attributed to the opportunities being '*limited on the women's side compared to the men's due to the nature of audiences and obviously the media rights and the broadcasting*' (Social Media Manager, Club A). Before Covid-19 impacted the world of sports, the future of the league looked promising, with the announcement that for the first time, the WSL would have a title sponsor following a £10 million investment from Barclays (Garry, 2019). However, the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities faced by female athletes in the world of football and sports in general.

Conclusion

This study explored the expectations placed on players' use of social media in two English football clubs during their first season under the new professional structure of the WSL. Both clubs recognised that the WSL's recent change to professionalism had positively impacted how they can use social media for marketing their brand. The players are now full-time professionals, meaning they have greater availability to participate in developing content for social media. The transition to professionalism has also improved cooperation between the clubs and the FA. As a result, the clubs have greater access to game footage. The women's football departments in both clubs now enjoy an increase in status and more time is allocated to marketing the women's team. Both clubs acknowledged that areas of their social media strategy could be improved and believed this would happen when staff became more experienced and familiar with what works. The research shows that for the WSL and its players who do not receive mainstream media coverage on a daily basis, social media can provide a space to generate publicity and promote the club, at the same time that allows athletes to build their personal brand.

However, there is still a lot of work to do, while this study shows that female footballers are willing to embrace their position as role models and promote women's football from the grass roots, they cannot do this without more support and resources. The broader lack of direction for the women's game is likely to negate

their efforts in the long run (Dunn, 2016). The world of full-time professional women's football is a relatively new addition to the football industry in the UK. It could, for example, change how women consume sports. Due to different social and cultural factors, in general women do not watch as much sports as men. However, the affordability and ease offered by social media to access sport content could potentially enable women's sports to become mainstream. This would help women players to build a fan base, gain media coverage (Guest and Luijten, 2018) and ultimately affect the stature of women's football with better budgets and working conditions. Some clubs in the WSL are further along in their journey as a professional team and some clubs in the National Women's Soccer League in the United States have been professional since the league's inception (Rossi and Rubera, 2018). This provides an opportunity to benchmark and learn from how other women's professional clubs are using social media to engage their fans, increase consumption of women's sports and build brand identity. Further research of a similar nature to this paper in a few years, once the professional structure of the WSL is more established may yield a more comprehensive understanding of the use of social media for marketing within women's professional football.

While the scope of this paper is limited, it does make clear that clubs must understand what type of content attracts the most fan engagement in order to build a robust social media strategy while also providing appropriate support to players. If women's football is to grow and develop further then the governing bodies globally must examine the provisions for women's football within their jurisdiction, acknowledge the shortcomings and seek to develop strategies that can combat the issues surrounding player well-being that might affect the future of women's football. Without first addressing this inequity faced by the women's game, it will be hard to create a convincingly friendly and welcoming narrative toward prospective female players and fans.

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Coping mechanisms employed by Irish fire-fighters and association with stress and anxiety: A role for Critical Incident Stress Management?

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Abstract

Emergency services personnel experience high levels of stress daily (Minnie et al., 2015), with an individual's ability to cope with such stressful situations determined by their perception of stress, as well as the coping mechanisms they employ. The aim of this study was to investigate coping strategies employed by Irish firefighters and the association with perceived stress and anxiety levels. A further aim was to determine attitude towards CISM supports such as post-event Psychological Debriefing/ Defusing. A mixed method survey design (N-72) employing both the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS21) were completed by participants from a full time urban based station providing Emergency Medical Services, and five stations on 'retained' status. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. Results suggested a moderate positive correlation between Stress and Avoidance and a weak positive correlation between Stress and Social diversion, Avoidance distraction, and Emotion orientated coping strategies. Qualitative analysis indicated that respondents relied on talking, colleague support, and recreational activity for stress management. The study concludes that stress management supports are necessary for workers in highly stressful environments, considering the reliance on less healthy forms of coping strategy.
Key words: Critical Incident Stress Management; Coping mechanisms; Firefighters Stress; Anxiety.

Introduction

Emergency services personnel experience high levels of stress on a daily basis (Minnie et al., 2015) with interventions such as psychological debriefing commonly

used as an intervention in the aftermath of a stressful or traumatic event (Mitchell, 1983a; 1983b). Research has previously established that high levels of stress and anxiety can have negative implications on an individual's cognitive functioning through poor memory retrieval and ability to function (Bryant et al., 2007; Biggs et al., 2010; Kehl et al., 2014). This has had significant implications for firefighters, affecting their personal health and relationships. Anxiety levels may increase in anticipation of an unpleasant future event, which firefighters are frequently exposed to. Several studies have asserted that the prevalent form of coping mechanisms firefighters use in these situations is 'problem-focused' coping, with Young et al., (2014), estimating that half of firefighters employed such strategies in their work. Other forms of coping strategy employed were also noted, with a third of firefighters using 'emotion focused' with a further 17% replying on both 'problem' and 'emotion orientated' strategies.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a seven-step programme used by the Irish Fire Service to educate (e.g., through talks, handouts etc.), help build supports to manage stress (e.g., resilience), and generally support individuals. CISM is an integrated, multi-factor model approach aimed at providing individual and social support to reduce distress, consisting of components such as pre-crisis education on stress management, diffusion, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), and follow up individual support if required (Regel, 2007). It has been reported however, that the working environment can affect the process through difficulties with management, heavy workloads and work rosters (Healy and Tyrrell, 2013).

In terms of use, CISM has been noted as effective in several highly pressurised work environments, such as, amongst soldiers who perform peacekeeping duties in dangerous environments (Adler et al., 2008), with police officers (Leonard and Alison, 2010), and with nurses (Herrema et al., 2020). Generally, CISM and debriefing was designed to create a structured approach for emergency workers who have experienced a critical incident. One such component, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), was formulated in the 1980's, and was purposely designed for groups of individuals who have experienced the same traumatic event in order to alleviate distress experienced, and to provide psychological support and closure to the incident (Mitchell & Everly, 2000).

The aim of the current study was to explore current levels of stress and anxiety amongst common groups of Irish firefighters; firefighters who work at retained stations (i.e., stations which act on an on-call basis), firefighters who work in the sole capacity of firefighter at full time stations, and firefighters who act in a dual 'firefighter and paramedic' role at full time stations. Additionally, coping mechanisms among these groups were investigated in terms of association with stress and anxiety, with a qualitative analysis exploring attitudes toward critical incident stress management (CISM). Finally, factors such as length of service and age were explored for associations with these psychological factors.

Stress, anxiety and associated demographics: A review

Specific event types have been highlighted as being considerable stressors within the Emergency Services, such as incidents involving children, suicide of a colleague, and when the victim is known to the responder (Health Service Executive (H.S.E.), 2012; Alexander and Klein, 2001). As a result of such incidents firefighters can experience several stress related responses, including acute, episodic acute, and chronic stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). High levels of hyper-arousal can also result in anxiety, loss of an internal locus of control and a sense of helplessness; as well as physical ailments such as muscular pain, which is commonly experienced among firefighters (Sterud et al., 2011; Vaulerin et al., 2016). However, it has been reported that having social support may create a buffer towards stress by increasing resilience towards stressful situations (Udwin et al., 2000; Gibbs and Montagnino, 2007; Lee et al., 2013; Meyer et al., 2012). Notwithstanding, a recent meta-analysis by Fraess-Phillips et al., (2017) on stress and firefighters indicated that this area still remains under- researched, with conflicting results. Furthermore, studies have tended to focus more specifically on traumatic stress and PTSD than on general levels of stress among firefighters (e.g., Fraess-Phillips et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2016).

Age has also been associated with higher stress levels, with research reporting that the age of the individual, the age the firefighter commenced service, and the length of service, influences stress levels (Fullerton et al., 2004). For length of service, research has reported a positive correlation with the ability to cope with stressful events, but more recent studies have noted that the ability to cope may be more specific to the level of stress and the coping strategy employed. Biggs et al. (2010) suggests that other extraneous variables such as early or historical exposure towards a stressful event may induce a stressful response, which may make a firefighter more susceptible to developing acute stress disorders after a particularly stressful experience. As a result of the limited and conflicting views on the effect of age and service length on firefighter stress and anxiety, research is needed to further investigate these socio demographic variables. Therefore, an aim of the current study is to explore this under researched area of stress and anxiety (see Fraess-Phillips et al., 2017) among both firefighters and FireFighter-paramedics.

The use of coping strategy among firefighters

Lazarus (1966) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified how an individual will, through a primary appraisal process, decide if the stressful event is a threat to the individual, and will subsequently move to the secondary appraisal process or coping strategy to manage the stressful situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) categorised two styles of coping, namely problem focused coping and emotion orientated coping. Problem-focused coping involves an individual identifying the issue or situation and deciding how the source of the stress can be alleviated, whereas emotion-focused coping is centred on a strategy employed by the individual which does not address the actual situation itself, but centres around the individual's emotional response to the situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

With regard to an avoidance response, such coping styles have generally been included as part of emotion-oriented coping. Indeed, Parker and Endler (1992) noted that avoidance can have both person-oriented and task-orientated responses. and thus has been categorised as a separate coping strategy consisting of avoidance distraction and avoidance social diversion coping. Avoidance distraction coping occurs when an individual deflects their attention from the event or incident whereas avoidance social diversion coping involves turning to others during stressful times. Some research has highlighted that firefighters tend to employ problem-focused coping as opposed to avoidance-coping or emotion coping (Young et al., 2014; Chamberlin and Green, 2010; Wagner and Martin, 2012). Other studies have posited that a combination of coping styles may be employed, with Bryant and Guthrie (2007) reporting that, among trainee firefighters, a maladaptive (avoidance) self-appraisal could be considered a risk factor for an individual developing a more acute stress disorder such as PTSD.

As previously described, length of service may also impact the type of coping strategy employed to deal with adverse situations. Coping strategies can change over time, and through years of experience more effective strategies may further develop. Some researchers have posited the opposite however, where firefighters with more years on the job employed inefficient coping strategies (Nydegger et al., 2011). Again, the limited and contradictory findings on changes in coping mechanisms employed by firefighters, will be investigated in the current study with a specific aim on the association between employed strategy, stress, and anxiety, and whether such strategies employed are affected by service length. Therefore, another aim of the current study is to investigate the relationship between coping mechanisms employed by firefighters and levels of stress and anxiety. Length of service and the coping mechanism employed is also examined.

Coping and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

The World Health Organisation (as cited by H.S.E., 2012) refers to a critical incident as "...an event out of the range of normal experience – one which is sudden and unexpected, makes you lose control, involves the perception of a threat to life and can include elements of physical or emotional loss" (p. 4). Commonly used interventions to such events, such as psychological debriefing, typically lasts between two to three hours and is typically conducted within 24 to 72 hours of a stressful incident (Mitchell and Everly, 1993). In comparison, methods such as defusing occurs within one hour up to four hours after the critical incident, which ranges from 30-60 minutes in duration. Both debriefing and defusing are group-based processes, allowing group members to communicate thoughts and emotions about a critical incident and receive support from colleagues. According to Robinson and Mitchell (1993), respondents who were debriefed reported that the stressful event had less of an influence on them both at post-debrief and indeed over time. Whilst some researchers support psychological debriefing after a stressful incident (Adler et al., 2008), others remain against it. The Cochrane Review (Rose et al., 2002; Van Emmerik et al., 2002) provided a more critical assessment of CISD, with some researchers arguing that it provided considerable distress for individuals

injured in an event (Bisson et al., 1997). However, some argue that these criticisms are flawed, with some studies including no baseline, or having timing, control group, and ethical issues. Other issues include a lack of appropriate training for those conducting the debrief, issues around the debriefing process itself, and a high rate of attrition (Robinson and Mitchell, 1993; Regel, 2007; Robinson, 2004; Campfield and Hills, 2001. Arce (2018) reported that debriefing was effective when implemented directly in the aftermath of a serious incident, and more crucially there were no indications that CISD was harmful to the participants. Moreover, a more recent review has suggested that frequent interventions did have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the participant through alleviating stress, with a noted increased improvement in sleep (Wild et al., 2020).

Jeannette and Scoboria (2008) conducted research on CISD and firefighters' highlighted preferences of intervention, including how the type of post-incident intervention implemented could depend on the severity of the event. Peer support and group discussion were favoured as the most desired forms of intervention, with combined individual counselling and CISD favoured in high intensity cases. Regarding social support, reassurance of worth from peers and family was especially important, enhancing resilience in stressful situations, and contributing to positive coping (Varvel et al., 2007; Crowe et al., 2017). This is perhaps more noticeable in areas where firefighters do not have a structured and consistent approach to deal with high levels of stress related incidents. Indeed, recent research conducted amongst firefighters in Saudi Arabia highlighted this as a key issue. Alghamdi et al. (2016) surveyed 219 firefighters with varying degrees of service (1 to 29 years). High levels of anxiety, depression and symptoms relating to PTSD were reported. The authors attributed this to the absence of a formal or structured intervention for firefighters in Saudi Arabia following a stressful or traumatic event, and potential stigma for accessing mental health services. Such repeated exposure to trauma has negative effects on the mental health of firefighters and further research is warranted in this area (Jahnke et al., 2016).

The coping mechanism of the individual may also lead to dissatisfaction with the outcome of CISD. Tran and North (2018) found that individuals who experienced more avoidance were more likely to report that they found CISD ineffective. It was noticeable that despite this, the individuals did recognise the importance and function of CISD and did favour this as an intervention for others. They reported that it was the individual's coping mechanism which influenced their ability to cope with the trauma and their response to the effectiveness of the CISD intervention.

The CISM model currently in place offers a multi-component approach and, at present, firefighters can engage in Critical Incident Debriefing or Defusing on a voluntary basis, however some previous research suggested that first responder debriefing or defusing should be mandatory for significant stressful events occurring within an occupational capacity (Ross-Adjie et al., 2007). The final aim of this research is to explore, through a qualitative approach, the views of firefighters with regard to CISM interventions, and whether other supportive strategies are also employed. A qualitative component to determine the effectiveness of CISM/ Debriefing was used due to a lack of reviews of meta-analysis for quantitative

analysis in this area. It is envisaged that the qualitative component of this research will provide additional depth and context to respondents' answers regarding the effectiveness of CISM/ Debriefing process.

The Current study

The current study examines coping strategies employed by Irish firefighters and association with stress and anxiety. It was hypothesised that emotion-oriented coping would predict higher stress and anxiety levels among Irish firefighters. It was further hypothesised that avoidance coping would predict higher stress and anxiety levels. It was hypothesised that age and length of service would predict stress and anxiety levels in firefighters generally. It was further hypothesised that coping mechanisms adopted by firefighters would differ depending on length of service. In addition, qualitative analysis explored attitudes towards CISM among Irish firefighters.

Methods

Participants

Seventy-two firefighters (Male= 71, Female= 1) stationed in Ireland from six stations participated in this study. The research was conducted in one urban area which used an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. The EMS system consisted of individuals operating a dual role of firefighter/paramedic (n=27) and five retained stations worked solely in a firefighter role (n=45). Mean age of the group was 42.37 years (SD= 7.88) with age ranging from 23 to 57 years.

Design

This study consisted of a mixed method correlational design with cross sectional analysis between groups. The research employed non-probability convenience sampling. A questionnaire was developed using quantitative and qualitative open and close ended questions.

Procedure

All firefighters were on call at the time of completing the survey. The station officer was briefed that if they had to attend a call, the questionnaires could be taken with them to be completed later. Participants were briefed that the questionnaires contained items relating to stress and anxiety and how individuals manage stressful situations in addition to questions relating to CISM. Participants were informed that the last page of the questionnaire provided the numbers of useful helplines, and this was followed by an invitation to complete the questionnaire. Participants were reassured that responses were anonymous, and their participation was completely voluntary. In the interest of confidentiality, questionnaires could be completed in a location at the participant's discretion. No call out was received at the time of completing the questionnaires.

Measures

Participants were required to complete a battery of measures including the 'Stress' and 'Anxiety' subscales of The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond and Lovibond, 1996), the Coping inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS; Endler and Parker, 1999), and a series of demographic questions. Three qualitative questions related to Critical Incident Stress Management were also included.

There were a number of single item measures at the beginning of the questionnaire. This included Sex (Male or Female), Age (in years), and length of service, which was measured across four categories ('0-4 years', '5-9 years', '10-14 years', and '15 years plus'. They were also required to indicate their current role (Firefighter or Firefighter/Paramedic), whether they worked full-time or in a voluntary capacity, and in an 'Urban' or 'Small Urban/Rural based' station. Close ended questions were asked to provide additional information for descriptive statistics such as sex and longitude of service.

The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21; Lovibond and Lovibond, 1996)

The DASS 21 scale is a 21 item scale with each item measured on a four-point Likert scale with values ranging from '0, the question did not apply' to '3, applied most of the time'. Participants were asked to determine how likely each of the posed questions had applied to them within the last seven days. The 'Stress' and 'Anxiety' subscales from the DASS 21 were used. The anxiety subscale of the DASS 21, consisted of questions such as, 'I was aware of dryness of my mouth' and the stress subscale, included questions such as, 'I found it hard to wind down'. Each of the sub-scales contained seven items. The Cronbach Alpha indicated excellent reliability for stress (.9) and anxiety (.86). These findings were supported by external research on reliability for the DASS 21 (Osman et al., 2012).

The Coping inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS; Endler and Parker, 1999)

The CISS consists of 48 items, with each item measured on a five-point Likert scale with values ranging from '1' to 5', where individuals specify how they react to stressful situations, from '1', not very much, to '5', very much. Participants rated how they engaged in certain situations when they experienced a stressful or upsetting experience such as 'Try to be with other people' or 'Watch TV'. The CISS also indicated excellent internal reliability with Cronbach Alpha readings for task orientated coping (.88), emotion orientated coping (.93), and avoidance coping (.89) (McWilliams et al., 2003). There are two subs-scales within the avoidance coping scale which are distraction coping and social diversion coping. Distraction coping provided very good internal reliability (.81), and an acceptable reliability measure for social diversion (.75) was reported.

Qualitative questions

Three additional questions around Critical Incident Stress Management were asked and the responses were analysed through inductive thematic analysis. The questions were:

1. "Critical Incident Debriefing and Defusing, (shortened version of CID) are both techniques used in the aftermath after a particularly stressful situation. Have you ever participated in a Critical Incident Debriefing or Defusing?",
2. "Do you believe that Critical Incident Debriefing OR Defusing should be mandatory after a particularly stressful situation? (Please circle your response). Can you please briefly explain".
3. "On a personal level, can you briefly describe what aspects of Critical Incident Stress Management techniques you engage in and/or find effective?"

Ethics

This study was reviewed and approved by the Dublin Business School Human Research Ethics Committee. A cover sheet was provided with the survey which invited participants to take part. This also included important information such as an outline of the survey, the contact details of the authors and important helpline numbers should any of the questions trigger negative feelings for the participants. Participants were advised that this was an optional survey and consent was formed by the completion and return of the survey. All participants were over 18 years of age. The questionnaires were stored securely, and the information was uploaded to a password protected computer.

Results

Demographic descriptives

Seventy-two participants took part in the study, with an average age of 42 years. Twenty-seven participants self-identified as having a dual firefighter/paramedic role, with 45 confirmed as firefighters in a sole capacity. A large proportion of participants (64.8%) had at least 15 years of service, with 22.9% having 10-15 years of service. Just over 12 per cent (12.3%) reported less than 10 years of service in the role.

Demographic differences in Stress and Anxiety among firefighters

Firefighter-paramedics (M= 5.38, SD= 6.21) were not significantly different to firefighters (M= 6.73, SD= 4.89) regarding stress scores, as measured by the Stress subscale of the DASS (t= .32, df= 69, p= .315). Similarly, Firefighter-paramedics (M= 2.22, SD= 3.91) did not differ from firefighters (M= 3.45, SD= 4.3) regarding anxiety levels, as measured by the Anxiety subscale of the DASS (t= 1.21, df= 69, p= .229). Skewness and kurtosis values for age (-.23, -.69), anxiety scores (1.74, 2.52) and stress scores (.84, -.05) were all within appropriate parameters of normality (Hair et

al., 2010). Regression analyses found that age did not significantly predict either stress ($F_{(1,68)}$= .003, p= .959) or anxiety ($F_{(1,68)}$= .05, p= .828) among firefighters generally. With regard to assumptions for Analysis of Variance, Levene's test indicated that homogeneity of variance was not violated for length of service on stress scores (p= .557) but it was for anxiety scores (p= .025).A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to measure whether stress and anxiety differed in terms of length of service. Skewness and kurtosis values for both stress and anxiety in each of the length of service categories did not exceed the parameters deemed unacceptable (Hair et al., 2010), apart from skewness in the 10-14 years category, which indicated levels higher than two (2.26). As a result of homogeneity of variance being violated, the significance value for anxiety was reduced to .01. Analysis found that length of service did not differ significantly for either stress ($F_{(3,66)}$= .62, p= .606) or anxiety ($F_{(3,66)}$= .63, p= .596).

Firefighters' coping strategies: Association with Stress and Anxiety

A regression analysis was conducted to measure specific coping strategies, as measured by the CISS, as predictors of stress and anxiety. Skewness and kurtosis values for all coping strategies, as measured by the subscales of the CISS, were all within -1 and 1, indicating appropriate parameters of normality (Hair et al., 2010). With regard to H1, Emotion Oriented coping was found to be a significant predictor of stress ($F_{(1,63)}$= 36.21, p< .001, adjusted R^2= .35) (Emotion Oriented, beta= .6, p< .001, CI(95%) .16, .32), suggesting that higher emotional coping predicted increases in stress levels. For H2, Avoidance Focused coping also significantly predicted stress ($F_{(1,63)}$= 10.26, p= .002, adjusted R^2= .13) (Avoidance Focused, beta= .37, p= .002, CI(95%) .06, .26). A regression was further conducted with Avoidance Distraction, which significantly predicted stress individually ($F_{(1,65)}$= 11.01, p= .001, adjusted R^2= .13) (Avoidance Distraction, beta= .38, p= .001, CI(95%) .12, .48), as did Social Diversion ($F_{(1,68)}$= 5.71, p= .02). A multiple regression model was conducted with Avoidance Distraction and Social Diversion on stress, which was significant ($F_{(2,63)}$= 5.76, p= .005, adjusted R^2= .13). However, only Avoidance Distraction was a significant individual predictor in the model (Avoidance Distraction, beta= .38, p= .016, CI(95%) .06, .54) Task Oriented coping was not found to be a significant predictor of stress ($F_{(1,69)}$= 1.5, p= .225). These results suggest that emotion and avoidance coping strategies predict stress levels, with higher stress attributed to greater use of such strategies. See table one for the coefficients between coping strategy and stress.

Table 1: Coefficients between predictor variables and stress

Coping Mechanism	B	SE	β	t	p
Emotion Oriented	.24	.04	.6	6.02	<.001
Avoidance focused	.16	.05	.37	3.2	.002
Avoidance Distraction	.3	.09	.38	3.32	.001

Social Diversion	.34	.14	.28	2.39	.02
Task Oriented	.08	.06	.15	1.22	.225

Table 2: Coefficients between predictor variables and anxiety

Coping Mechanism	B	SE	β	t	p
Emotion Oriented	.21	.03	.74	8.7	<.001
Avoidance focused	.11	.04	.34	2.84	.006
Avoidance Distraction	.23	.07	.38	3.29	.002
Social Diversion	.15	.11	.17	1.39	.169
Task Oriented	.03	.05	.08	.64	.527

With regard anxiety levels among firefighters generally, Emotion Oriented coping was a significant predictor ($F_{(1,64)}$= 75.61, p< .001, adjusted R^2= .53) (Emotion Oriented, beta= .74, p< .001, CI(95%) .16, .26). As with stress, total Avoidance Focused coping also significantly predicted anxiety ($F_{(1,63)}$= 8.04, p= .006, adjusted R^2= .1) (Avoidance Focused, beta= .34, p= .006, CI(95%) .03, .18). Avoidance Distraction also predicted anxiety ($F_{(1,65)}$= 10.82, p= .002, adjusted R^2= .13) (Avoidance Distraction, beta= .38, p= .002, CI(95%) .09, .37). Neither Social Diversion ($F_{(1,68)}$= 1.93, p= .169) nor Task Oriented coping ($F_{(1,69)}$= .4, p= .527) were found to be significant predictors. Similar to stress, Emotion and Avoidance Coping strategies predict greater anxiety levels among firefighters. See table 2 for coefficients related to coping and anxiety

Length of service and Coping strategy

For H3, a one-way anova was conducted to measure differences in coping strategy employed based on years of service. Levene's test was not significant with reference to these comparisons. Skewness and kurtosis values for all coping strategies, with regard to specific length of service categories, were all within the appropriate parameters of normality (Hair et al., 2010). Results suggested that years of service did not predict differences in coping strategies measured; Task Oriented ($F_{(3,67)}$ = .37, p= .773), Emotion Oriented ($F_{(3,62)}$= .35, p= .789), Total Avoidance ($F_{(3,61)}$= 1.35, p= .266), and Avoidance Distraction ($F_{(3,63)}$= 1.3, p= .284).

Thematic Analysis of CISM responses

Thematic analysis was applied to participant responses regarding whether defusing/debriefing should be a mandatory part of the critical incident process of firefighter work. Four overarching themes were identified: Personal experience, Open communication, Social support and Awareness.

Theme 1: Personal experience

Some participants outlined the importance of individual experiences and needs being catered for within the scope of the critical incident process. For example, participant 61 reported that *"…some people find different things stressful. But the option should be there"*. In addition, participant 30 commented that such needs are *"…dependent on the incident and allowances should be facilitated to individuals who may require a different approach"*.

Participants highlighted the importance of an idiosyncratic approach, an environment where there were open lines of communication and a support network for the persons involved in the same incident, where they can freely express themselves, which is a critical element of CISM.

Theme 2: Open communication

The debriefing/defusing process facilitates the acknowledgement of certain emotions which may be experienced after an incident. In doing so, it enables the respondents to release thoughts or emotions and establish boundaries between their personal and professional life, and not allowing whatever occurs in their professional life to impact their personal one.

To illustrate, participant 38 refers to difficulties becoming detached from work when at home, one *"…can bring work stuff home, its not fair on family, so debrief is vital"*. Also, participant 20 comments on the importance of colleague communication, where *"…after a particularly stressful firecall its important to talk with crew and make sure any issues are dealt with"*.

Colleagues who have experienced the same stressful incident express the necessity to identify any issues and bring these to the fore. Indeed, fellow firefighters remark on the comradery and also the bond and social support they provide to each other during difficult times.

Theme 3: Social support

Participants found aspects of peer support particularly helpful. Participant 7 highlighted that, *"...just talking and reinforcing all was done that could be"*. Participant 9 also acknowledges that *"It helps others to realise that everyone can suffer the same"*. Furthermore, participant 16 described how *"It helps clear the mind, and reassures you that you are not alone"*. Social support allowed individuals the space to acknowledge their feelings with their colleagues *"...understanding its ok to be not ok"* (Participant 3) and provided a sense of reassurance from other crew members who experienced the same incident.

Theme 4: Awareness

Some respondents commented on how debriefing/defusing brings awareness to an individual, and how an event may result in longer-term mental health issues. For example, participant 36 emphasised that there can be implications if such a process

is not in place, where one can be significantly impacted by a critical incident. They commented that, after a serious fire incident, where a number of people were killed, *"…my father…received no counselling and it caused hin [sic] major problems later in live [sic]"*.

Respondents do acknowledge the function of CISM in providing an insight into their own individual thoughts, and emotions to process how a stressful, or even traumatic event may have impacted them.

Reported effectiveness of CISM

Table 1 below illustrates aspects of stress management which individuals find effective after a critical incident.

Table 3: Aspects of stress management participants engaged in

Themes	Frequency
Talking	18
Social Support of Colleagues	9
Recreational Activity	7
Nothing/Don't engage in any	7
Debrief/Defuse process	5
Experience Sharing	3
Drinking	3
Humour	2

Talking was the most frequently reported effective means of stress management, identified by 18 respondents. Furthermore, social support and recreational activity were also self-reported as effective. A point of possible concern was that the joint third most popular response was 'Nothing/Don't engage in any'.

A possible explanation for this may be that some firefighters rely on more problem-focused coping strategies which are associated with lower levels of stress. They may have felt that they did not need to actively engage in stress management techniques. Indeed, this may also be due to the CISM programme employed at the stations, where a supportive culture is in effect, and where individuals may feel supported to speak to each other about their emotions. This may be sufficient for some firefighters.

It is important to note that some participants did highlight further aspects of stress management, which would not be considered a specific part of the CISM process, such as alcohol consumption. However, the authors found this important to include as it was specifically employed by some respondents as a way to manage stress.

It must also be noted that there was a high rate of participants who did not answer this question, with only 27 out of a possible 72 participants responding, representing 38% of the total sample size.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to investigate stress and anxiety levels among Irish firefighters and those in firefighter/paramedic dual roles, and relationship with coping strategy employed. It also set out to examine the roles of age and service length on coping strategy. Attitudes towards CISM programmes were also explored.

Firstly, results suggest no difference in stress or anxiety levels between those in firefighter/paramedic dual roles, and those self-identified as firefighters exclusively. When looking at firefighters generally rather than comparatively, higher stress levels were correlated with greater emotion-orientated or avoidance coping levels. Interestingly, Baker and Williams (2001) previously found that firefighters who reported high levels of work-related stress engaged more in problem-focused coping, which is in contrast with the findings of the current study. Regarding sub-styles of avoidance coping, the current study found a relationship between stress and social diversion, and stress and avoidance distraction, which does fit with previous findings. This is interesting, while avoidance coping may be effective in terms of short-term management, it may not be a healthy strategy to employ long-term. Indeed, those reliant on such coping styles may be predisposed to developing stress related disorders (Minnie et al., 2015). Similarly, findings suggest a relationship between anxiety and avoidance coping, emotion orientated coping and avoidance distraction. There was no relationship for anxiety and either task orientated or social diversion. One point to note is that this study used the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS) as opposed to some of the more popular measures of coping, such as the Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE). Indeed, the COPE was employed by Nydegger et al (2011), who reported higher stress levels for older firefighters. The current findings did not find a similar trend, so it may be possible that the use of different measures accounts for the contrasting findings.

Findings further suggest no effect of age or length of service on stress or anxiety levels among firefighters generally, which contrasts with Fullerton et al. (2004), who noted that younger firefighters exhibit higher levels of stress, and Nydegger et al. (2011) who posited that higher levels of stress were observed for older firefighters. Differences were expected between these groups due to firefighters having to perform the dual role of firefighter/paramedic and thus exposed to a heavier or more stressful workload (Healy and Tyrrell, 2013). While this was not observed in the current study, this may have been affected by a comparatively low number of younger firefighters participating in the current study. Regarding length of service, Fullerton et al. (2004) had suggested that rescue workers showed lower levels of stress due to less years in the job, while Biggs et al. (2010) suggests that other extraneous variables may impact an individual's ability or experience of events, and even suggests that early prior experience could potentially trigger a stress reaction. This was not reflected in the current study. The current study suggests that

an individual's coping mechanism may impact their level of stress as opposed to age or years of service, though further research is needed to test this.

In the current study, no effect of length of service on coping strategies employed was found. Studies have shown that problem-focused coping was common amongst firefighters, while emotion-focused coping has also been observed (Minnie et al., 2015). It has been further suggested that this may change through experience (Leonard and Alison, 1999; Young et al., 2014). However, the current study fails to support these findings. While this was the case in this study, we previously mentioned that younger firefighters were not equally represented. Moreover, coping mechanisms may not be dependent on length of service, but are interchangeable. Specifically, the coping mechanism employed may depend on the critical event itself experienced by the individual. For example, someone may generally engage in problem focused coping, but for particular incidences, the individual may employ emotion focused strategies, or a combination of problem focused and emotion orientated responses. Further research is needed, particular with regards to firefighter coping strategy and association with experience, with more inexperienced and younger firefighters represented. The lifting of the employment moratorium will allow for such investigation.

Thematic Analysis Results

Analysis of CISM debriefing attitude suggested that open communication, personal experience and social support were major themes relating to the debriefing process. Previous research suggested that the debriefing/defusing process should be mandatory after a critical incident and has been well evidenced in its efficacy (Ross-Adjie et al., 2007; Arce, 2018). In the current study, respondents were supportive of the process, and had previous experience of the debriefing/defusing process. Many were complementary of the supportive environment, for bringing awareness of the critical incident and the impact this may have had. Open communication was identified as important, to facilitate the individual to express thoughts and feelings attributed to the incident. This was further supported by the aspects of CISM which participants engaged in on a personal basis or found effective in the immediate aftermath of an incident. Moreover, debriefing/defusing, according to the current study, provided a structured environment. For most incidents, analysis suggested that an informal talk amongst colleagues appeared to be sufficient. Indeed, Jeannette and Scoboria (2008) found how a variation to approaches depending on the severity of the incident was preferred amongst firefighters and the result from this thematic analysis is in line with this.

Strengths and limitations

The current study provides insight into coping styles employed by firefighters, an area where research has been somewhat negligible (Fraess-Phillips et al., 2017). Also, the mixed method approach, with quantitative analysis establishing coping strategy and association with current stress and anxiety coupled with qualitative analysis of attitude toward CISM, brings depth by identifying self-reported aspects of CISM that firefighters engage in, and find beneficial to them.

One point to note with the current study is the limited representation of participants in the inexperienced or younger firefighters' cohorts, as a result of a freeze on new recruits, which was in place at the time of data collection. A large majority of the participants had at least 10 years' experience, which caused a comparative imbalance. While variances between groups were comparable, and met the assumptions for reliable comparisons, this is still a point of consideration. Similarly, the group size for firefighters based in retained stations was less than those in the full-time stations. Larger and more comparable groups may help to establish more confidently if coping mechanisms or service length affects stress and anxiety when presented with repeated critical incidents over time. As research has previously established (Fullerton et al., 2004) age has been found to impact levels of stress. Also, the current study did not consider specific job-based factors which may differentially affect firefighters. For example, in urban areas, it may be that firefighters deal with a higher volume of calls. However, for retained stations in more rural environments, there may be less frequent calls, but hours may be more unsocial, with greater chance of calls involving people that are known.

For the qualitative component of the study, questions were left unanswered by a large proportion of respondents. Some factors, such as perceived length of the survey and the time of day may have affected response rate on these questions. Respondents from the retained stations were also visited in the evening time, after training sessions, so fatigue may have been a factor. Future research may address these concerns by considering questionnaire length and providing greater convenience for questionnaire completion.

While the lead author of the current study has been educated in the role of awareness of stress and stress management, and the importance of stress management for dealing with particularly stressful situations, it must be noted that an inductive interpretation of open-ended responses will be affected by the subjective experiences of the researcher. While efforts were made in the current study to ensure that pre-existing theoretical structures did not interfere with the validity of responses, for example by employing a systematic approach to interpretation, it is important to highlight the reflexivity of such an analysis.

Implications

This research provides insight in stress management programmes for firefighters, post critical incidents, and how an individual's coping style may affect their ability to manage the impact of critical incidents (Minnie et al., 2015). Understanding the impact of an individual's coping strategy on individual and repeated stressful events may be able to provide further insight on the effectiveness of structured and formal CISM programmes. For example, for someone using an avoidance-based coping strategy an idiosyncratic approach may also need to be considered. The authors hope that this research provides additional and more contemporary perspective in this important area and provides context for firefighters operating within the Irish Fire Service. Further research, however, is needed, particularly with younger and inexperienced firefighters and their ability to cope with stressful incidents and bringing awareness to the fire Services on the effectiveness of CISM amongst all

age and service level experience cohorts. As previously reported by Fullerton et al, (2004), disaster workers with acute stress disorders were over seven times more likely to develop symptoms in line with the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress disorder at 13 months.

Awareness of an individual's own coping mechanism, such as avoidance distraction, can inform the individual and employer of why, in some cases, there may be reluctance to participate in mandatory debriefing and for the employer to provide additional individual interventions or follow ups after critical incidents. In the current study, it is suggested that emotion and avoidance focused coping was a significant predictor of stress. A respondent, who for example engaged in avoidance focused coping after a critical incident, may try to avoid or not favour the mandatory debriefing/ defusing process. Some respondents did indicate that they wished for such debriefing to be optional and not mandatory, though they were still in favour of the process. It could follow that the employer, by being aware of this viewpoint, can still provide a reasonable duty of care to their employee by providing individual interventions or follow ups after particularly stressful critical incidents.

Future Research

Moving forward, introduction and examination of CISM based models in areas where such a model is absent, and longitudinal studies of younger and/or inexperienced firefighters may provide further understanding on the medium to long term benefit of structured stress management programmes. Alghamdi et al. (2016) reported high levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD among firefighters in Saudi Arabia who did not have formal or structured interventions following exposure to a stressful event. CISM programmes can contribute to lower levels of stress and anxiety as evidenced by this research.

Whilst this research supports CISM as an effective stress management technique, future research in the form of longitudinal studies with newer recruits examining stress/anxiety is necessary to further understanding in this area. Measuring employed coping mechanisms over their period of service and an exploration of whether employed coping mechanisms can change with age or experience would be recommended. Future research could also establish if an individual's coping mechanism and engagement with CISM can change with repeated exposure to critical incidents. In addition, investigation of psychological correlates of stress in locations where an Emergency Medical Service (EMS) based system was used in urban centres, would be an important extension of the current findings.

There is a paucity of research surrounding stress levels amongst firefighters with most research focusing on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and not general stress. The effectiveness of defusing and debriefing on firefighters has been somewhat conflicting with negligible research available. In the current study, several themes emerged from the qualitative analysis, particularly with regard to defusing/ debriefing. High levels of social support, personal open communication and awareness protect individuals against stress. A potential barrier for the effectiveness of defusing/debriefing, however, concerns individuals who engage in avoidance coping

strategies (Tran and North, 2018). In terms of mandatory debriefing/defusing, the results suggested that an idiosyncratic approach may at times be needed. This research is, nevertheless, supportive of the effectiveness of debriefing/defusing as part of CISM for as a formal and structured approach to serious incidents.

Conclusion

Qualitative analysis provides support for the use of CISM. The benefits of these have been previously discussed, such as participants commenting on the importance of having a sense of cohesiveness and support in their job. It is particularly beneficial for firefighters who may not have had prior exposure to stressful situations particularly in those situations where fatalities resulted. There were no significant results between persons who engaged in problem focused coping mechanisms and anxiety or stress, which may suggest that for firefighters who engage with this type of coping mechanism, CISM and debriefing is effective for reducing stress after critical incidents. The quantitative data provided an insight into the significance of stress and anxiety and the coping mechanism employed by the firefighter. To conclude, conflicting quantitative reviews of the success of CISM may suggest that a tailored approach for firefighters which considers the individual coping styles could, at times, be required. The current study further highlights the presence of particular coping styles and their association with stress and anxiety outcomes, while also considering how CISM can indeed play an important role in the management of such outcomes at an individual level.

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The Marshmallow Test: Understand Self-Control and How to Master It
Walter Mischel
(Bantam Press, 2014)

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Your future in a Marshmallow? What the book of the famous self-control test can tell us about success

In the early 1960s, Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel and his team conducted an experiment to examine self-regulation processes. Pre-schoolers were challenged with a dilemma; individually, in a room, they were given a choice between one marshmallow on the table that they could eat immediately (immediate gratification) or waiting for a better, but delayed reward, and getting two marshmallows (delayed gratification). This experiment is called the Marshmallow Test. What Mischel found with the experiment and its replications, as with the findings from other related research and its implications in real-world scenarios, is what you will read in the pages of the book "The Marshmallow Test- Understand Self-Control and How to Master It".

Observing the struggles that children experienced in trying to contain themselves, their creativity to resist temptation, and the motivation for the enhanced delayed rewards, Mischel found that children differ in their degree of self-control. He and his colleges continued to follow the group of pre-schoolers for years, and they found that children who had more self-control in preschool and postponed the reward were more successful in high school. He suggests that self-control in early life can be an indicator of success and well-being in the future. These findings led researchers to explore how our ability to control ourselves influences the journey from preschool to retirement planning; furthermore, has many profound implications for the choices we make every day from parenting, education, public policy, major business decisions, weight control, stop smoking, etc.…

Mischel brings us to the realisation that we live in a marshmallow test. We grow up, we change the marshmallows for other rewards: money, recognition, prestige, etc. However, the author is not suggesting choices made by a pre-schooler will determine the rest of their life - we all know that real life and human behaviour is more complex than that. The bottom line from these studies is: if you want to improve your chances to succeed at something, self-control can help you to make the tough choices and maintain the effort needed to achieve your goals. The big question is: "can self-control be learned or is it prewired?

As Daniel Kahneman demonstrated in "Thinking Fast and Slow", Mischel's book divides behaviour into two systems: hot and cold. The hot system is more impulsive and focuses on immediate rewards and the cold system is the most rational, one capable of playing the long game. How well it works, as he explained, will depend not just on skills but internalising aspirations and values in direction to the goals, but also on motivation that is strong enough to beat the obstacles along the route.

The book is very interesting because it expands upon the initial experiment demystifying willpower as an inborn trait that you either have or don't have; it is possible to develop the ability to delay gratification just as it is possible to develop muscles in the gym. Self-control is not an all-or-nothing character trait, professionals can be excellent at avoiding distractions during working hours but may not be very disciplined with their diet. The author explains no matter how bad you are at self-control "naturally, many researchers have demonstrated the plasticity of our brains and the malleability of human nature". As Mischel cited in his book, Carol Dweck's research suggests we must think about our abilities and intelligence as malleable skills, skills that we can improve with practice, therefore improve our performance. We often assume that excellence and success require Homeric efforts, that goals in our career, business, or other aspects of life demand enormous doses of willpower and motivation. Mischel reminds us that the reality is, in most cases, that all it takes are small, manageable steps; in business called SMART goals. Failure is repeated bad decisions, it is not just one marshmallow, but hundreds of decisions that are made every single day. Consistency in good habits is the key to going far and is what leads to success. Projects need actions, even if small. Ideas need movement to get off the ground.

The author dedicates two-thirds of the book to explaining the core concept and writes in-depth about years of research, which was quite repetitive. The third part of the book is dedicated to how to use the findings. The author exemplifies tactics used in the study that can help us improve discipline and develop self-control, as some examples:

1- <u>Delay gratification system</u>: you can develop a reward system, a coffee break after completing a chore, or if you are a wanderlust like me, five minutes looking at travel destinations after sending a difficult email, or any small treat that can be considered a reward for you.

2- <u>If-then plan</u>: if you consciously observe the patterns of not desirable behaviours that consistently happen in your daily life, over time that will lead you to be aware and target the hot spots. Once you know the "if" stimuli and situations that trigger behaviours you want to modify, you are

positioned to change how you appraise and react to them – that becomes your "if-then" plan.

3- <u>Your future self</u>: planning for the future because it is too far away, is not an easy task. It is much easier to prioritise immediate rewards over something that may only happen in the long run. The author describes a research that can be used as a tactic for future planning such as retirement: to create an avatar online representing your future self, a projection of what you will look like when you are 70 years old. Your future self is no longer an idea and seeing yourself at 70 makes you reflect on what you will want for yourself when you reach this age. This can help you emotionally get engaged with this future picture of yours, think more clearly to make your decisions today, and make you more likely to stay committed to your resolutions.

Mischel anecdotally demonstrates the power of choice through a narrative of a psychologist who analysed a patient suffering from anxiety; the patient asks, "Am I falling apart?" and the analyst replies: "Would you like to?". This narrative demonstrates that there is a choice, even if subconscious, to allow ourselves to become carried away by our behaviours. It is up to us to make our choices as it is also our responsibility to deal with the consequences. Strengthening self-control is a way of identifying the moments when we make these choices and how we can change our behaviour to achieve our goals. Mischel observed that the self-perception of the children with higher self-control skills was as someone who believed he could do it and acted as the causal agent to the desired outcome. It is an "I think I can" mindset.

Without bias, the author makes us reflect on the question: is delayed gratification better or should we enjoy the moment? The key is equilibrium; in Michel`s words "A life with too much of it can be as unfulfilling as one with too little". I couldn't agree more, as much as I believe that success depends on hard work and foregoing immediate gratifications for the sake of a greater future reward, I also believe that life without some immediate small joys loses its grace.

To conclude, with decades of compelling research and life examples, the crystal-clear message of the book is that self-control is an acquirable skill that can be mastered and has profound consequences for achieving success. Mischel clearly explains success does not come like a recipe in a cookbook. What leads to success is the combination of reasonable talent, hard work, and the ability to keep going in

the face of defeat or when things get frustrating. Who you are and what you can be is a choice that you make every day in your life. Everybody can find ways to improve self-control, no matter their age. I end this review with the same quote that Mischel made at the end of his book, recalling and modifying Decartes' famous phrase "I think, therefore I am" for "I think, therefore I can change what I am". The Marshmallow Test will change the way you think about who you are and what you can be, so I highly recommend you read this enthralling book.

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