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'Against All Odds': Head Chefs Profiled

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‘Against all odds’: Head Chefs Profiled

Abstract

This study based on a survey of 170 head chefs provides the first comprehensive empirical data on the profile of head chefs in the Republic of Ireland. 84% of head chefs were male and the majority (48.8%) were in their thirties. There is an increased rise in the attainment of degrees (currently at 35%) but findings showed that it takes years to advance in the industry, where there is a high rate of turnover. This article both reviews and adds to the international literature on the occupation of chef and raises questions for further research such as; why are there so few female head chefs in Ireland? What is the best way to manage talent and improve retention of head chefs? Why are there more migrant head chefs working in restaurants rather than hotels? Findings from this may benefit industry stakeholders, employers, educators and prospective culinary students.

Keywords: Head chefs, Gender, Ireland, Culinary arts, Culinary education

1. Introduction

Research on chefs remains proportionally under-represented in hospitality literature. Specific research on head chefs is extremely rare. This paper seeks to contribute to addressing this gap by profiling head chefs working in the Republic of Ireland. Head chefs overcome many perceived difficulties in their workplaces to succeed against all odds at the

top of their profession (Collins, 2001; Iverson & Deery, 1997; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Pratten, 2003; Robinson & Barron, 2007).

This study aims to provide the first comprehensive empirical data on the profile of head chefs in the Republic of Ireland, and shed light that may benefit industry stakeholders, policy makers, employers and educators as to future developments in the industry, thus adding to the international literature on the occupation of chef. Building on the work of scholars such as Fine (1996), Pratten (2003), and Zopiatis (2010), this paper raises a number of questions about current practice in professional kitchens and identifies areas for further study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Culinary Workplace – Its Characteristics:

Common characteristics of the culinary workplace include long hours of work (Mac Con Iomaire, 2008; Wang et al., 2011) that are unsociable and irregular (Pratten, 2003; Robinson & Barron, 2007), high stress levels (Wang et al., 2011; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007, Mac Con Iomaire, 2008; Iverson & Deery, 1997), low compensation and limited opportunities to progress within the industry (Jauhari, 2006). The culinary industry is also by nature, very labour intensive (Washington et al., 2003). Problems experienced by staff can also include discipline issues, conditions that are cramped, with no fresh air and too hot, especially in summer (Pratten, 2003).

An Irish career website for school leavers notes that after qualification, most chefs take a job in a kitchen and work their way up the ranks, but point out that quick progression,

though possible, requires much hard work and dedication (Careers Unlimited, 2015). They continue:

Chefs work in all kinds of places – mostly restaurants and hotels, but also pubs, cruise liners, and schools. Kitchens are generally stressful, hot, and noisy places to work and some head chefs run their kitchens like army generals. Long and unsociable hours, an angry working environment, and split shifts are all part of the job; but there are many positives too – the opportunity to self-express, work within a tight-knit team, along with the chance to travel and work in other countries (Careers Unlimited, 2015).

A very high level of staff turnover is another characteristic of the culinary workplace that many authors have observed (Brien, 2004; Robinson & Barron, 2007; Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Wang et al., 2011; Zhang & Wu, 2004). A recent report in *The Irish Times* newspaper (O'Brien, 2014) highlighted that there were 3,000 entry level vacancies with members of the Irish Hotels Federation. Sheehan (2014) also documents that there is a 31% turnover of staff within the hospitality industry in Ireland. However, individuals who can overcome the perceived difficulties mentioned above and thrive in such an environment, merit special attention and examination. Oral histories with a number of Irish chefs highlight how they faced these challenges to succeed against the odds in the past (Mac Con Iomaire, 2009), yet this research is focused in the present, in a much transformed culinary landscape.

2.2 The Head Chef:

Harrington (2005) sees the head chef as CEO and the team members as the board of directors in a business, which is the kitchen. However Fine (1996) proposes many images that can be used to define the work of a chef, seeing them as a professional, an artist, a business leader, a manual labourer, a craftsperson, a scientist, a humanist and a philosopher, thus showing the multifaceted roles that a head chef must possess. Balazs (2002) studied three star Michelin chefs in France and found that they were extremely charismatic and attracted

loyalty from their team who were willing to work long hours, often for little or no pay, to feel part of something special. One aspect highlighted by Pratten (2003) and more recently in an Irish context by Murphy (2015) was how this loyalty can exacerbate staff turnover, as when a head chef quits, they often take the whole team with them.

The organisation of the kitchen is usually quite defined by the progression of roles based on seniority using the *partie system*, which is attributed to Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935). Under this structure the head chef or *chef de cuisine* was in charge, assisted by a number of *sous chefs* and *chef de partie*, each of which would be in charge of a section in the kitchen and would have a number of *commis chefs* or apprentices working with them. In a large hotel the head chef could be in charge of up to 100 staff, whereas in a small restaurant they might only have two or three other chefs in the kitchen (Taylor & Taylor, 1990). Historically, there has been a gendered difference between the words cook (female) and chef (male), but nowadays the term chef applies to all. While many chefs are classically trained, plenty of successful award winning chefs, both male and female, are self-taught (Mac Con Iomaire, 2008). Most head chefs, though, rise through the ranks in the workplace (Jauhari, 2006). Many will have entered their profession at the bottom and worked their way up the occupational ladder (Careers Unlimited, 2015). Head chefs then succeed in a tough work environment and merit special attention.

2.3 Demographics:

2.3.1 Gender

Previous research shows that the majority of top managerial positions in the culinary industry are filled by men rather than women (Zopiatis, 2010; Agut et al., 2003; Hertzman & Maas, 2012; Kang et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2011; Chuang et al., 2009; Raybould & Wilkins,

2005). These studies show that 95.7% of Cypriot chefs, 84% of Spanish participants, 85% of US chefs and head cooks and 83% of certified chefs of the American Culinary Federation, and 59% of senior food and beverage managers in Taiwan, were male.

However Pratten & O'Leary (2007) make a pertinent point as they found that 50.2% of all food and beverage employees in the UK were female. Similarly 46% of full time employees in Taiwanese restaurants and kitchens (Wang et al., 2011) and 59% of the hotel and catering workforce in Ireland (MRCI, 2008) were female. These figures highlight that despite equal gender employment in the culinary workplace it is more likely for men to progress to the top. This trend follows many other industries as Boone et al. (2013) highlight that research consistently shows women in the minority at top leadership positions.

Previous research on career success in other industries has found mixed results. Judge et al. (1995) found that older, married men with a supportive spouse and good education had a greater amount of success in their careers. In contrast, Melamed (1996) found that individuals with the highest amount of objective success were men, without a family, who had a high calibre job and a long tenure with a manufacturing company.

The research by Boone et al. (2013) points away from a glass ceiling for women but suggests that women are more likely to prioritise their families rather than work and often self-select roles that are more family friendly. A recent interview with H el ene Darroze, named the 2015 world's best female chef, highlights how many extremely talented, senior female chefs she has known in their late 20s and early 30s ended up choosing to become wives and mothers at the expense of their careers (Day, 2015). Similar research by Valcour & Ladge (2008) found that women who began childbearing at relatively older ages, those who

had fewer children and those whose childbearing commenced longer ago, earned higher incomes. They also found that women with fewer career gaps, less inter-organisational mobility and those with less part time work in their career histories earned higher incomes as well.

Previous research has also examined the issues of income related to gender. In contrast to studies mentioned above, Tu et al. (2006) found that in contrast to studies from a Western context, women in China and top level decision makers had the highest earnings. However, Seibert & Kraimer (2001) found a non significant relationship of gender and salary.

The current study seeks to examine how gender interacts with the career success of a head chef and whether variables such as wages, career data or family constellation interact with gender in the career of head chefs working in Ireland.

2.3.2 Age

The mean age of Ladkin's (2000) UK study of hotel managers was 40 years old with the mode being 33 years old. The average age of managers in China is 37 years (Tu et al., 2006). In Spain (Agut et al., 2003) the mean age of hotel and restaurant managers was 41 years while in America members of the American Culinary Federation of certified chefs had a mean age of 45-54 years (Kang et al., 2010). Chefs in Cyprus (Zopiatis, 2010) had a range of ages between 20-50 years. These studies show that a wide range of ages work in the hospitality industry but that the majority of managers are about 40 years old. However there is no data specifically dealing with head chefs and therefore the current research will provide data specifically on the mean age of head chefs working in the Irish culinary industry.

2.3.3 Marital Status

Most managers of any workplace including the culinary world are married. 63.8% of senior kitchen and restaurant managers in Taiwan (Wang et al., 2011), 75% of hotel managers in the UK (Ladkin, 2000), and 73% of managers in China (Tu et al., 2006) were married. These figures show that very high proportions of staff at managerial level are married, however this may also have some interaction with the age of managers as by the age of 40 years many who are going to marry will have done so. The one exception to these figures was from the study by Chuang et al. (2009) among supervisors in LA casino hotels where only 52.7% of these employees were married with 42.8% being single. This finding, however, may have more to do with the culture of Los Angeles and its casinos.

The link between marital status and success revolves around the importance of family and spouse support in career success (Judge et al., 1995; Wang et al., 2011). There is a lack of data to ascertain whether having a long-term partner would provide the same support as being married. Therefore this was a variable that was also measured in the current study.

2.3.4 Career Data

Often employees enter the culinary workplace at a young age. In Australia, Raybould & Wilkins (2005) found that most current managers had entered the workforce at age eighteen. In Taiwan (Wang et al., 2011) it took on average 11 years to progress to a managerial level. These findings show that progression to the top takes time over years of working up through the ranks in the work place.

Most hotel managers in the UK had held eight previous jobs (Ladkin, 2000) which would support findings of a high turnover within the industry. Job tenure was an average of 7 years in the Spanish hospitality industry (Agut et al., 2003), 7.4 years in America (Kang et al., 2010) and 8.5 years for managers in China (Tu et al., 2006). However the length of time employees had been working in the industry was much longer. In Zopiatis' study (2010) the majority of chefs in Cyprus had been working more than 20 years, with a similar picture in America where chefs had been working on average 24.8 years (Kang et al., 2010). While in Spain managers had managerial experience for an average of 16 years previously (Agut et al., 2003). These figures show that the culinary industry has a high degree of turnover with current job tenures only being about 7 or 8 years and many having held a number of previous jobs with other companies. In this regard it would be a benefit to understand the current state of affairs in the Republic of Ireland for head chefs. This may shed light on the career path of a chef in progressing to the top role in a kitchen, as head chef. This information could then be used by educators to develop realistic expectations in future students, for their careers. However it may also provide data on rates of turnover in the Irish industry and give information for employers that could be used in developing job retention strategies.

2.3.5 Wages

A study by the MRCI (2008) found that wages in the hospitality sector in Ireland were the lowest of any employment sector in the country. However, this data deals with the industry in general and head chefs represent a cohort of individuals who have succeeded "against all odds" in what is generally described as tough working conditions. Therefore it would be interesting to see if those who have succeeded have been compensated accordingly. Previous research also highlights that education impacts on wages, with those with better education, earning higher wages (Judge et al., 1995). Cognitive ability has also been found to

be an asset in career success and progression (Dreher & Bretz, 1991), and this would also likely impact on better education, as it would be a pre cursor to better educational achievement. Therefore the current study shall include both variables of wages and educational attainment in measuring the profile of head chefs and test the findings of previous research in the Irish culinary workplace.

2.3.6 *Job Satisfaction*

While levels of wages may be an objective measure of success, job satisfaction is a subjective measure of career success (Dries et al., 2008). Many studies have shown that there are a number of factors that influence job satisfaction. Mesch (2012) found that graduates with higher educational grades had higher industry persistence scores. Mesch (2012) also found that moderate levels of extra curricular food service experience during schooling appeared to be a benefit to graduates, who had greater industry persistence, which was linked to job satisfaction. Having networks of support, both at home and at work is another factor that is linked to subjective career success (Kuijpers et al., 2006; Bozionelos, 2008).

Demographic variables such as age also affect a person's view of their subjective career success. Tu et al. (2006) found that older individuals had higher levels of career satisfaction. Similarly Hertzman & Maas (2012) also found that participants who were out of school more than twenty-one years were more satisfied with their career than recent graduates. Thus with increasing age and life experience, increasing job satisfaction also seems to emerge.

With gender and job satisfaction, there seems to be a mixed range of research results. Ng & Pine (2003) only found gender differences on subjective career success factors for three

of the fourteen factors that they investigated. However Hofmans et al. (2008) found that men gave higher ratings than women on almost all items of a career satisfaction scale. Nicholson & De Waal Andrews (2005) suggest that gender differences in career satisfaction may be evident because women are generally more values based than goal focused in their careers.

Organisational factors can also have an effect on subjective career success. Tu et al. (2006) found that a person's position within a company contributed to levels of career satisfaction felt. Kuijpers et al. (2006) also found that mobility possibilities and dynamics of the current job were significantly related to subjective career success. This is further endorsed by work from Iverson & Deery (1997) where they found that within an organisation promotion opportunities, work atmosphere, role conflict and routinisation all affected job satisfaction. Therefore the current study will seek to measure ratings of job satisfaction for head chefs working in the Republic of Ireland and cross reference them with the other variables mentioned above to gain understanding into the life of a head chef. These insights may benefit employers, educators and supporting organisations within the industry to manage, develop and train its staff for maximum job satisfaction.

2.3.7 Perspectives on Work

De Vos & Soens (2008) examined the role of a protean career attitude in relation to career satisfaction. A protean career attitude reflects the extent to which an individual manages their career in a pro-active, self-directed way, driven by personal values and evaluating career success based on subjective success criteria. De Vos & Soens (2008) found that individuals with a protean career attitude report higher levels of career satisfaction. Therefore how a person views their job can also affect the satisfaction they feel in it. Indeed, Hall & Chandler (2005) found that participants who viewed their jobs as a calling

experienced higher levels of psychological success. Heslin (2005) also differentiates between people who see their work as a career that is entwined with their identity, a job where the focus is on financial reward or others who see it as a calling. Chen (2003) has also described how a person's career can be viewed as a process of self-realization, a journey and as context conceptualisation, where familial influences, interpersonal relationships, cultural values, the social and economic environments, the political atmosphere and natural changes all influence how and when and where a person carries out their work. Therefore the perspective that a person holds will influence their perception of the world around them and this should also affect their perception of their careers. In order to gain insight into the profile of a head chef it would be interesting to see if there is a dominant perspective in relation to work and if people with different perspectives also differ on other career or demographic variables. Should this be the case, it would be useful for management training to incorporate these perspectives into their courses and for students to be aware of the attitudes needed to be cultivated if they want to succeed in the industry.

2.3.8 Education

There is an increasing trend within the food service industry for those working in the field to attain degrees (Goyette, 2008) and the majority of culinary arts graduates end up with their first job as a bottom level cook in the industry (Hertzman & Maas, 2012). Despite arguing the case for not going to college, Steinberg (2010) concedes that people who have a college education usually earn more and have less risk of unemployment. It is also important to note that nowadays many chefs join the industry having completed undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in a wide variety of non-culinary disciplines. Ladkin (2000) found that 83.5% of hotel managers in the UK had hotel and catering qualifications. Zopiatis (2010) found the majority of chefs in his Cypriot study had a two-year diploma. Similarly only one

third of hospitality workers in Australia held a degree (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). In America 44.7% of the surveyed members of the American Culinary Federation held a degree (Kang et al., 2010) while the majority of supervisors in the casino hotels in LA only had secondary school education. There is a difference though between the two year Associate Degrees and a three or four year BA or B.Sc. Degrees (Harrington et al., 2005).

Research in an Irish context by Bolton et al. (2008) found that only 5% of surveyed chefs held a degree. However, a culinary arts degree had only been available in the Ireland since 1999 with the first cohort graduating in 2003 (Mac Con Iomaire, 2009: 256-261, 335-7). The setting up of the BA (Hons) Culinary Arts in the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) stemmed from Masters' research by Erraught (1998) in recognising the gap in training and educational provision of head chefs in Ireland. This new paradigm in culinary education which shifted the focus from craft / vocational to liberal was the study of a Doctoral thesis which was later published as a monograph (Hegarty, 2004). Since then a number of culinary arts degree programmes became available in Institutes of Technology all around Ireland. A Masters in Culinary Innovation and New Product Development commenced in the DIT in 2007 and four Irish chefs have been awarded Doctorates by DIT since 2009.

The phenomenon of Bachelor Degrees in Culinary Arts with a more liberal focus that promotes reflective practice and ethical training is becoming more common internationally also (Gustafsson et al., 2009; Hegarty, 2011; Shani et al. 2013). Deutsch (2014) highlights the need for 'building interest in an international faculty learning community of like-minded gastronomes and culinary educators looking to train young cooks to say not only, "Oui, chef!," but "Why, chef?"' Many culinary schools are rethinking their culinary curriculum in line with developments in media, science and technology. A number of researchers have

highlighted the need for further research into the effectiveness and content of culinary education (Harrington et al., 2005; Müller et al., 2009; Mesch, 2012; Shani et al., 2013; Magnusson Sporre et al., 2015). There are a number of planned Culinary Arts Degree programmes currently being developed in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The current research may benefit these curricula developments as to the role of education in the career of an individual who succeeds in progressing to the top of the kitchen and works as head chef.

2.3.9 Nationality

According to the CSO (cited in Keenan, 2013), the numbers of non-nationals living in Ireland increased by 25% between 2006 and 2011, rising by 200,000 to 766,777. It is common to see culinary jobs filled by migrant workers from foreign countries (Chalmers, 2004; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). A study by the MRCI (2008) found that 35% of the Irish hospitality workforce was made up of migrant workers, the highest, by far, of any major industry in Ireland. It should be noted, however, that many Irish born head chefs would have gained international experience working in the UK, mainland Europe, America and Australia. As mentioned earlier, one of the positives of a career as a chef highlighted by Careers Unlimited (2015) was the chance to travel and work in other countries. However, the tone of the research by the MRCI (2008) was that non-nationals working in Ireland faced difficulties and disadvantages compared to their national counterparts. The current research will examine whether differences in relation to wages, job satisfaction, career data, education or perspectives on work will be impacted by the nationality of the head chef.

2.4 The Irish Context:

The island of Ireland has thirty-two counties, six of which form Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. The focus of this paper is the other twenty-six counties

which gained independence from Great Britain in 1922 and is known as the Republic of Ireland since 1948 when it broke with the commonwealth. Despite previous scholarship on the history of Irish restaurants (Mac Con Iomaire, 2013, 2015) and how Ireland has become a ‘Foodie Nation’ (Deleuze, 2014), the current research provides the first comprehensive empirical profile of head chefs in an Irish context, and thus contributes to the literature on chefs internationally. Previous research of head chefs in Ireland focused on their food safety knowledge (Bolton et al., 2008) and occupational stress in the chef profession (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007), although the latter was based in Northern Ireland and cannot be directly compared.

There is a shortage of detailed research into the size and make-up of the Irish hospitality and catering industry. Data from the CSO (2014) and Fáilte Ireland (2012) is depicted in Table 1 below. Discrepancies between figures may be explained by the inclusion of staff canteens, hospital catering, prisons and other industrial catering units in the census that would not feature as part of tourism employment figures from Fáilte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland (2012) also provides figures separately for hotels, restaurants and pubs while the census (CSO, 2014) seems to just provide a general overview of the industry, although it does take account of event catering.

	Number of Establishments	Total Number of Employees	Specific Number of Culinary Employees
Restaurants	6,689 (CSO 2012) 3,713 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)	48,002 (CSO 2012) 52993 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)	11,357 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)
Event Catering	656 (CSO 2012)	10,039 (CSO 2012)	
Hotels	883 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)	46,373 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)	5,427 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)
Pubs	7,509 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)	50,721 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)	4,442 (Fáilte Ireland, 2012)

Table 1: Employees in the Irish hospitality sector

3. Methodology

The aim of this research paper is to investigate the profile of head chefs in the Republic of Ireland. It was decided that the best method to achieve this goal was to use a survey for data collection. The current research seeks to ascertain a picture of the workforce that manage Irish kitchens with a particular focus on issues of gender, age, nationality, marital status, career data, the impact of education, wages, job satisfaction and views of work. In this regard a survey instrument was devised based on the literature review with a total of nineteen statements with closed choice options for each variable that was to be measured. It was anticipated based on the literature review that there were interactions between many of these variables. Therefore it was planned to use a series of chi squared tests on these sets of nominal data by testing the relationship between each variable and the remaining 18 variables for significance. Since this was the first investigative and exploratory study into the profile of a head chef working in Ireland, a more general design was utilized for the research rather than setting a long list of hypotheses.

A pilot test was sent to a number of head chef participants for feedback. On receipt of ten responses, a few minor adjustments (wording/ typos) to the questionnaire were made. The scale reliability had an alpha coefficient of 0.96, which shows a very high degree of reliability. De Vaus (1993) proposes that alpha should be at least 0.7 before the scale can be said to be reliable. Since there were only minor changes to the wording in the questionnaire after the pilot these ten responses were included in the main results analysis.

In light of advice from Oppenheim (1992) and De Vaus (1993), cover letters were drawn up and two sponsored prizes were secured. A number of official bodies that represent

the catering trade in Ireland were contacted, including the Restaurants Association of Ireland (RAI) and the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF). These associations were informed as to the nature of the research, asked for their endorsement and access to their databases of contacts. The survey was sent to all contacts in the databases as there is greater reliability and generalizability from a larger sample size that accurately represents the population but also because of the high risk of low response rates. Since the costs of sending a postal questionnaire would be high, it was decided to send the questionnaire via email. The cover letter and questionnaire were then sent out. Over 1200 emails were sent to head chefs all around the Republic of Ireland, but only about 950 were valid addresses or did not overlap from the two organisations. An initial follow up email was sent two weeks later and a final email three weeks after to remind those that had not returned any correspondence that the closing date for responses was soon due.

There was quite a low response rate (7.47%) to the emailed surveys, 71 returned from about 950 valid addresses. However, a contact was secured from a contract catering firm that runs a number of restaurants in the corporate sector and the survey was sent internally to all 70 of her head chefs via email and 20 of these were returned (28.57%). To ensure a robust sample size, it was then decided to also personally call in to premises and ask the head chef to fill in the questionnaire and arrange a time to collect the questionnaires. Most of the walk-in collections were in Dublin city but some also from Wexford, Galway, Sligo, Wicklow and the greater Dublin region. The data collection phase took place in May and June 2014. The final response rate of 170 surveys was made up of 71 returned from initial email request, 20 returned from contract catering email request, and 79 completed following the researchers and their assistants walking in to establishments around the country and asking the head chefs to fill in the survey for later collection. Due to the fact that 3 methods of data collection were

used, as questionnaires were returned, each one was marked with a symbol denoting the method by which it was attained as it was considered that this may affect some results.

4. Results

4.1 Demographics:

170 head chefs from around the Republic of Ireland completed the survey and results were analysed using SPSS, version 22. There were 19 different nationalities represented in the sample. Since there were so many different nationalities, with 10 nationalities only having 1 participant represented, the data was recoded to having 5 different areas of the world represented. Ireland (114), the rest of Europe (28), Africa (2), the Americas (2), and the East (including China, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, India and Iran) (13) were the 5 re-coded areas. Table 2 depicts the breakdown of demographic findings.

4.2 Significant Relationships among Independent Variables:

As already outlined above, chi squared tests using crosstabs in SPSS were carried out between each of the 19 independent variables. There were 57 significant relationships among independent variables in this study, the most interesting and relevant of which are presented below. It should be considered, though that often unequal sample size numbers were present within each variable and that this may contribute some weakness to the statistics. However, due to the fact that 171 tests were carried out and 114 of these were not found to be significant, this should add some strength to the findings that were significant. As the p. values of the 57 significant relationships were so low, post-hoc tests were deemed unnecessary.

Demographic Description	Frequency	Percentage	Demographic Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			How Data Gathered		
Male	143	84.1%	Email	71	41.8%
Female	25	14.7%	Recruited	20	11.8%
Missing	2	1.2%	Walk In	79	46.5%
Age			Wages		
Under 30	22	13.1%	Under 20k	8	4.7%
31-40	82	48.8%	20-30k	21	12.4%
41-50	54	31.8%	30-40k	48	28.2%
51-60	9	5.3%	40-50k	32	18.8%
61+	1	0.6%	50k+	38	22.4%
Missing	2	1.2%	Missing	23	13.5%
Nationality			Wage Satisfaction		
Irish	114	67%	Totally Agree	33	19.4%
European	28	16.5%	Somewhat Agree	42	24.7%
Eastern	13	7.6%	Neutral	47	27.6%
African	2	1.2%	Somewhat Disagree	27	15.9%
American	2	1.2%	Totally Disagree	15	8.8%
Missing	11	6.5%	Missing	6	3.5%
Marital Status			Current Workplace		
Single	53	31.2%	Hotel	45	26.5%
Married	89	52.4%	Restaurant	111	65.3%
Divorced	13	7.6%	Bakery	7	4.1%
Other	14	8.2%	Missing	7	4.1%
Missing	1	0.6%			
Years Working			Location		
0-5	4	2.4%	Connaught	23	13.5%
6-10	24	14.1%	Ulster	4	2.4%
11-15	35	20.6%	Munster	18	10.6%
16-20	37	21.8%	Leinster	24	14.1%
21-25	41	24.1%	(except Dublin)		
26+	28	16.5%	Dublin	97	57.1%
Missing	1	0.6%	Missing	4	2.4%
Years Working as Head Chef			Years with Current Job		
0-5	58	34.1%	0-5	105	61.8%
6-10	47	27.6%	6-10	35	20.6%
11-15	29	17.1%	11-15	11	6.5%
16-20	20	11.8%	16-20	8	4.7%
21-25	5	2.9%	21-25	0	0
26+	6	3.5%	26+	3	1.8%
Missing	5	2.9%	Missing	8	4.7%
Previous Head Chef Positions			Salary Increases		
0	40	23.5%	1	21	12.4%
1	33	19.4%	2	57	33.5%
2	34	20%	3	46	27.1%
3	27	15.9%	4	13	7.6%
4+	32	18.8%	5+	21	12.4%
Missing Data	4	2.4%	Missing Data	12	7.05%
Job Satisfaction			Achievement Felt in Job		
Totally Agree	65	38.2%	Totally Agree	85	50%
Somewhat Agree	71	41.8%	Somewhat Agree	57	33.5%
Neutral	13	7.6%	Neutral	16	9.4%
Somewhat Disagree	11	6.5%	Somewhat Disagree	4	2.4%
Totally Disagree	5	2.9%	Totally Disagree	3	1.8%
Missing	5	2.9%	Missing	5	2.9%
See Work As			Highest Educational Achievement		
Identity	33	19.4%	Secondary School	19	11.2%
Calling	7	4.1%	Apprenticeship	32	18.8%
Means to End	7	4.1%	FETAC course	33	19.4%
Self-Realisation	16	9.4%	Degree	60	35.3%
Journey	77	45.3%	Masters	7	4.1%
Investment of Skills for the Good of Society	20	11.8%	Other	15	8.8%
Missing	10	5.9%	Missing	4	2.4%

Table 2: Demographics

4.2.1 Gender:

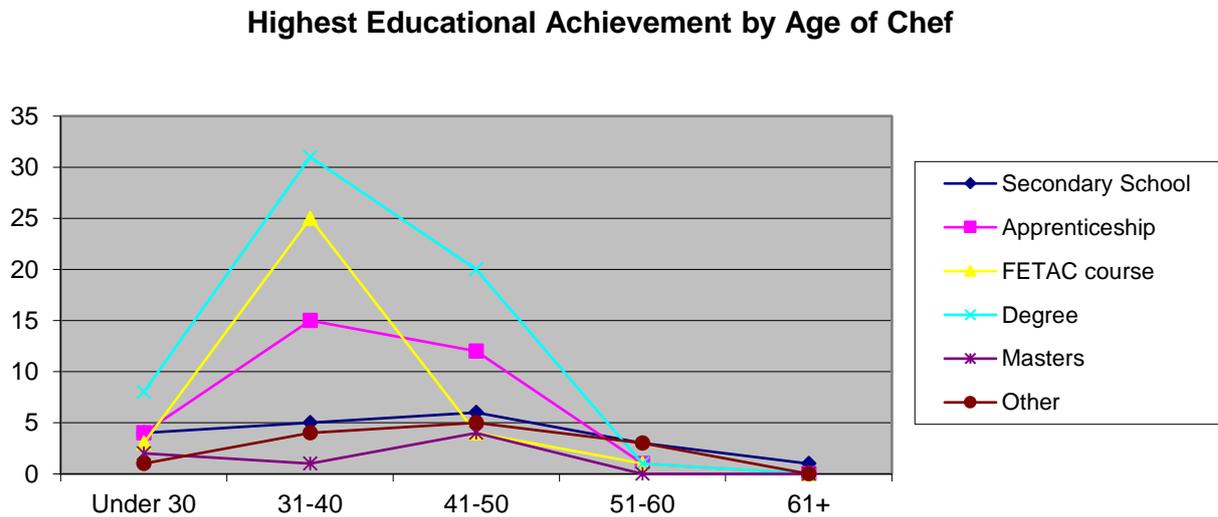
There was a significant relationship between gender and the amount of previous positions that head chefs in the industry ($\chi^2 = 15.1$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.01$). Male head chefs had more previous positions than female head chefs in the industry. There was also a significant relationship between gender and the number of salary increases that head chefs have received ($\chi^2 = 12.503$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.014$), with male head chefs gaining more salary increases than females. However, there was no significant relationship between gender and wages, although the statistics were very close to being significant ($\chi^2 = 8.67$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.07$).

4.2.2 Age:

As was expected there was a significant relationship between age and the number of previous positions ($\chi^2 = 30.892$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.045$), number of years working ($\chi^2 = 119.282$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.00$), years working as head chef ($\chi^2 = 91.448$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.00$), previous head chef positions ($\chi^2 = 50.294$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.00$), number of years with current employer ($\chi^2 = 58.634$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.00$), marital status ($\chi^2 = 57.938$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.00$) and the number of children ($\chi^2 = 57.455$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.00$). With each of these relationships as the age of the head chef increased so too did each of the other variables. As would also be expected based on the time frame that a culinary degree has been available in Ireland there was a significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 39.678$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.005$) between age and highest educational achievement (see Figure 1). There was also a significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 34.034$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.026$) between age and how chefs would describe their work.

➤ **Insert Figure 1 here**

➤ **Figure 1: Highest Educational Achievement by Age of Head Chef**

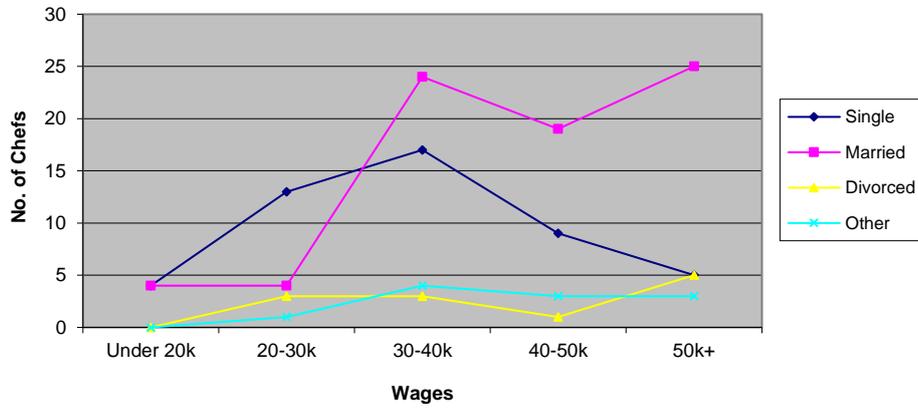


4.2.3 Marital Status:

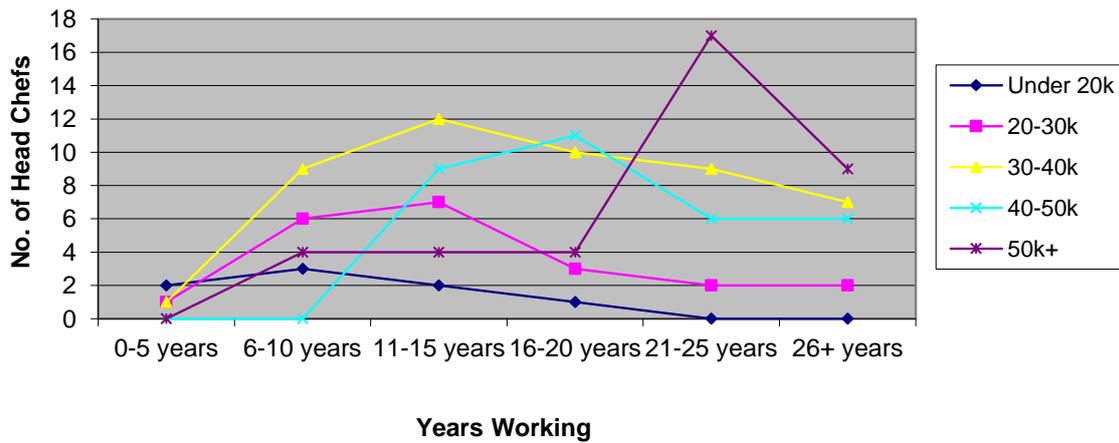
A significant relationship (see Figure 2) was found between the marital status of a head chef and wages they received ($\chi^2 = 22.165$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.036$). Chefs who were married earned higher wages than those single or who had a different status. The same pattern could also be found between marital status and the number of years working ($\chi^2 = 27.874$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.022$), the number of years working as head chef ($\chi^2 = 35.672$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.002$) and the number of previous head chef positions ($\chi^2 = 22.567$, $df = 12$, $p = 0.032$).

Figure 1: Wages in the Irish Culinary Industry

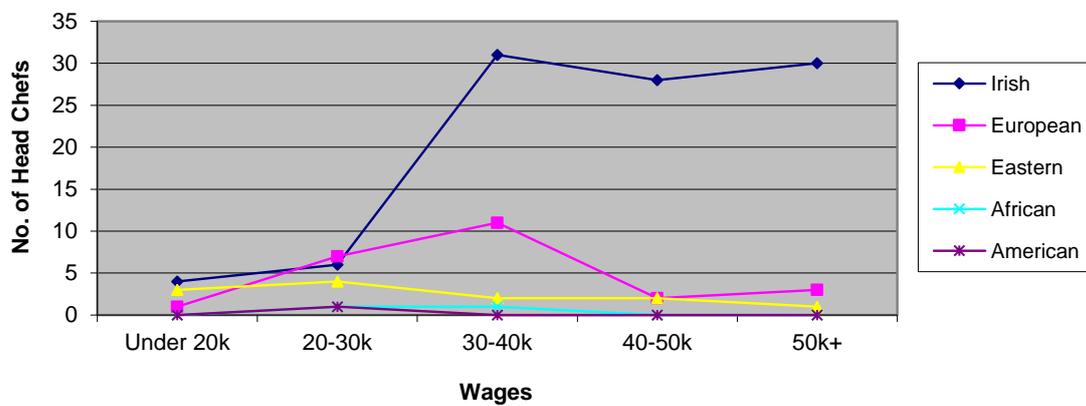
Marital Status and Wages



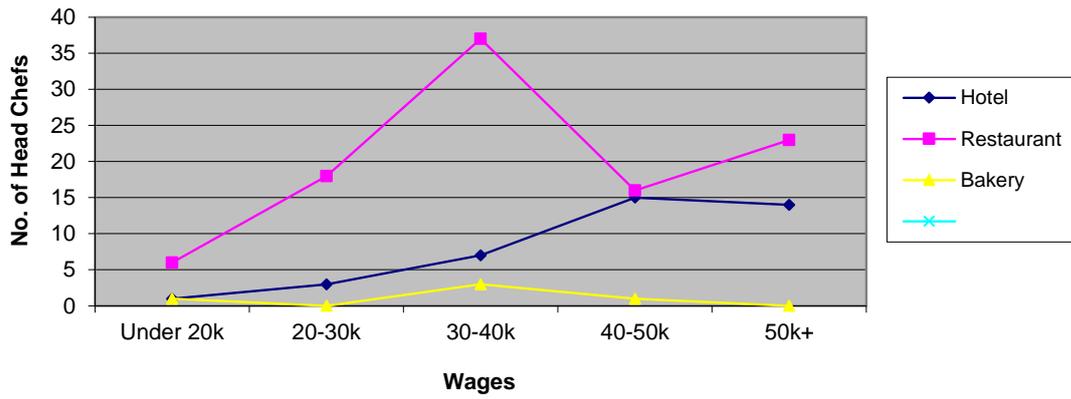
Length of Time Working and Wages



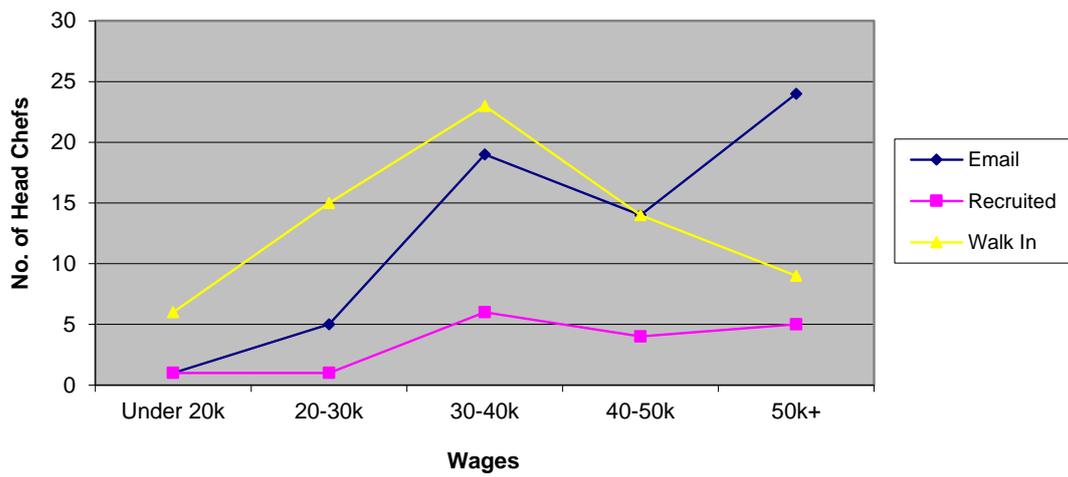
Nationality and Wages



Workplace and Wages



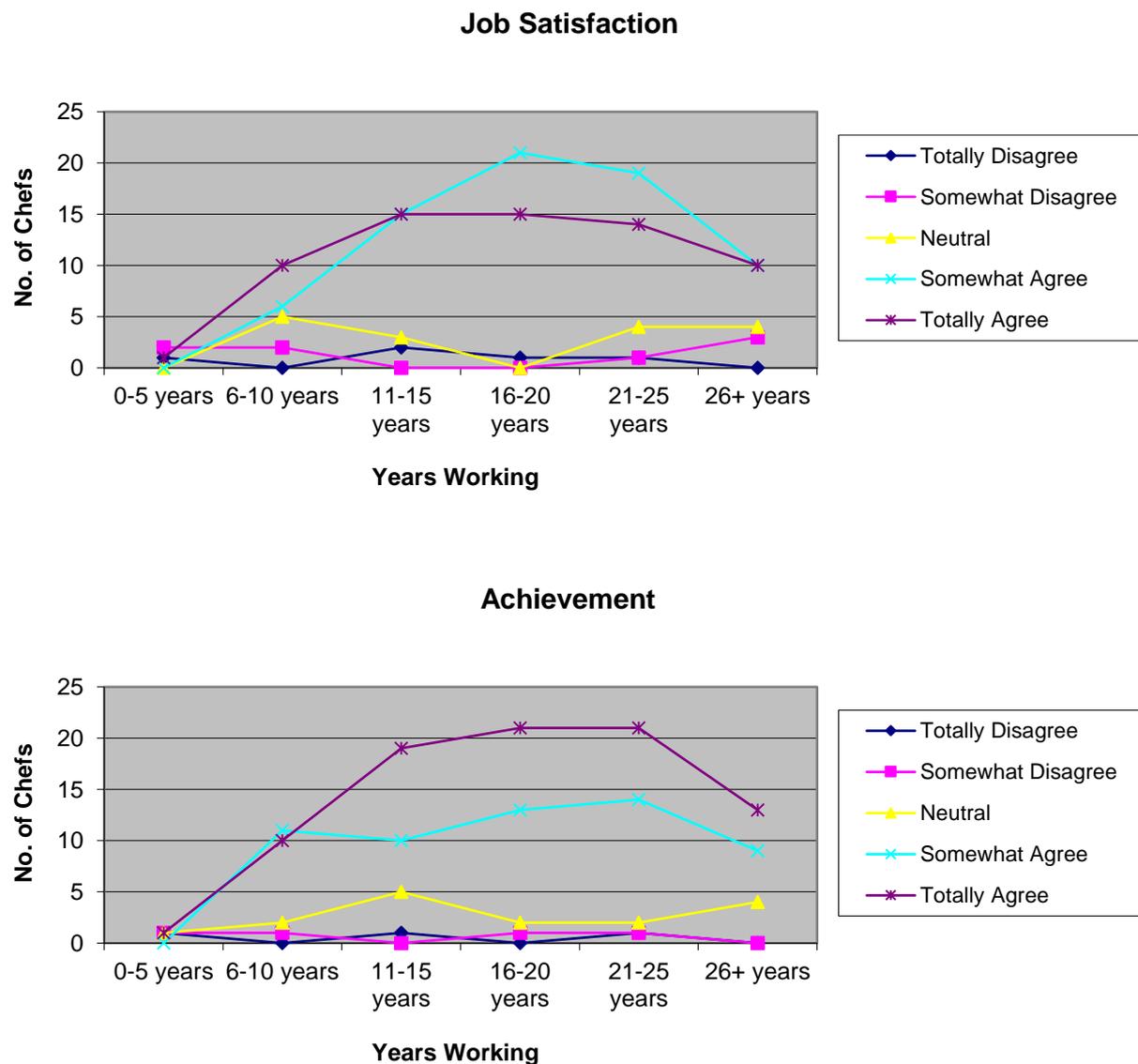
How surveys were Collected and Wages



4.2.4 Length of Time Working in the Industry:

As expected there was a significant relationship between the amount of years that a head chef had worked and their wages ($\chi^2 = 52.835$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.000$) with those who had been working longest earning the highest wages (see Figure 2). As length of time working in the industry increased so too did wage satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 40.64$, $df = 25$, $p = 0.025$), number of salary increases ($\chi^2 = 43.35$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.002$), previous jobs ($\chi^2 = 42.646$, $df = 25$, $p = 0.015$), years working as head chef ($\chi^2 = 134.083$, $df = 25$, $p = 0.000$) and previous head chef positions held ($\chi^2 = 75.12$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.000$).

Figure 3: Impact of Length of Time Working on Job Satisfaction and Achievement Felt



There was also a significant relationship (see Figure 3) between the length of time working in the industry and the sense of job satisfaction felt ($\chi^2 = 45.628$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.001$). After an initial starting time of five years feeling unsatisfied, most head chefs felt totally satisfied in their jobs at six to ten years but after ten years head chefs were only somewhat satisfied in their jobs. The length of time working also had a significant relationship with the sense of achievement head chefs felt in their job ($\chi^2 = 32.07$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.043$). After ten years most head chefs were in total agreement that they felt a strong sense of achievement in their jobs.

4.2.5 Nationality:

A significant relationship was found between nationality and place of work ($\chi^2 = 23.972$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.002$). From table 2, it can be seen that there were proportionally a lot more Irish head chefs in hotels than any other nationality. Also there were more European head chefs in bakeries than any other nationality.

There was also a significant relationship between nationality and wages ($\chi^2 = 39.345$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.001$). Figure 2 shows that while the majority of Irish head chefs were earning from €30,001 to €50,000+, the majority of European and African head chefs in Ireland were earning from €20,001 - €40,000, the majority of Eastern and American head chefs in Ireland were earning €20,001-€30,000. Although, it must be noted that the sample size of both the American and African head chefs was extremely small ($n = 2$).

4.2.6 Workplace:

A significant relationship exists between the type of place a head chef works and the wages they earn ($\chi^2 = 19.024$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.015$). Figure 2 shows that a greater percentage of those who work in hotels received higher wages (€40,000 – €50,000+) than those who worked in restaurants and bakeries (€30,000 - €40,000).

4.2.7 Wages:

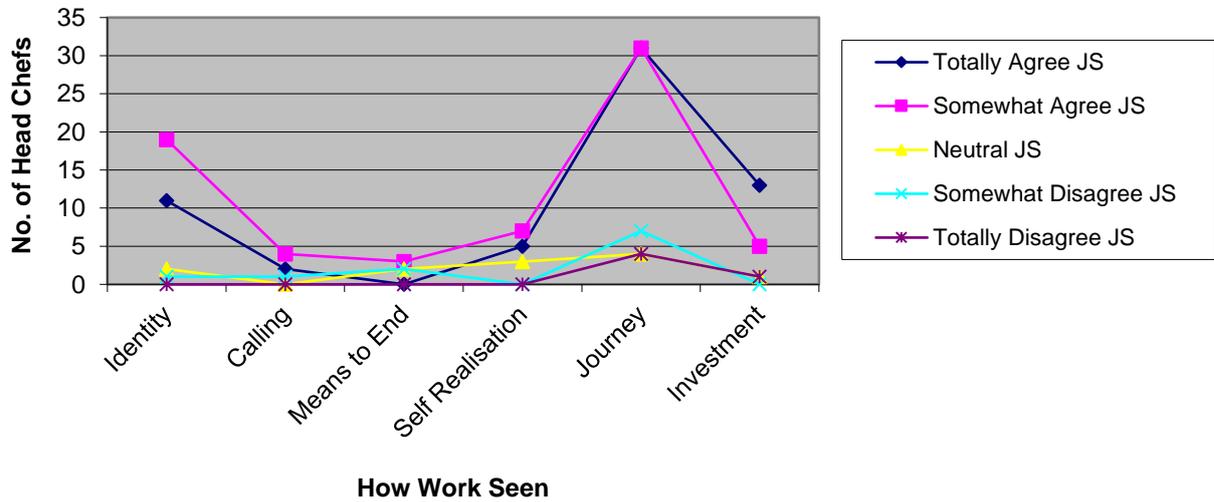
As already outlined in previous sections a number of interesting findings emerged in relation to the wages that head chefs were earning and the length of time working, nationality, current workplace and marital status and these findings are shown in figure 2. As one would expect, the wages that head chefs earned also showed a significant relationship with the number of salary increases ($\chi^2 = 44.786$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.000$) and wage satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 41.04$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.004$). In both these cases, as wages increased the number of salary increments also increased, as did wage satisfaction. Salary increases also showed a significant relationship with the number of previous positions ($\chi^2 = 60.786$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.000$). However the wages chefs earned also showed a significant relationship with job satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 30.686$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.015$) and how much achievement they felt in their jobs ($\chi^2 = 28.504$, $df = 16$, $p = 0.028$). How the questionnaires were collected also showed a significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 16.94$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.031$) with the wages that were earned by head chefs (see also Figure 2). Results showed that those who responded via email were earning higher wages.

4.2.8 Methods of data collection:

How the surveys were collected also showed a significant relationship with the highest level of education that the chef had received ($\chi^2 = 20.03$, $df = 10$, $p = 0.029$) and how many years they had been working as a head chef ($\chi^2 = 21.318$, $df = 10$, $p = 0.019$). Those

who responded via email had generally more education and more years working as head chef than those whose responses were collected by walking in to the premises.

Figure 4: How work is seen and job satisfaction



4.2.9 Perspectives on Work:

A significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 31.127$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.054$) can be seen between how chefs see their work and how much job satisfaction they feel (see Figure 4). Of note is that those who see their job as a personal investment for the good of society experienced more job satisfaction than any other group. There was also a significant relationship between the perspective held on work and also how much achievement they feel in the role ($\chi^2 = 37.48$, $df = 20$, $p = 0.01$).

5. Discussion

5.1 A Picture of the Average Irish Head Chef working in the Republic of Ireland

The results of this survey from 170 head chefs from around the Republic of Ireland provide a picture of the average head chef working in Ireland. He is male, born in Ireland, in

his thirties, just married with no children, who has a degree and has been working in the industry since then or even worked through getting his degree. He is a new head chef, in his current job less than five years, with four to six previous positions, working in a restaurant in Dublin, earning €30-€40k with two previous salary increases. He is neutral about satisfaction with his wages, is somewhat satisfied with his job and totally agrees that he feels a sense of achievement in his job, where he sees his job and career as a journey that changes and progresses over life.

5.2 Main Findings:

5.2.1 Gender

The results of this study show that 84% of head chefs surveyed in the Republic of Ireland were male. This finding is similar to previous research which shows that the majority of top managerial positions are filled by men (Hertzman & Maas, 2012; Zopiatis, 2010; Kang et al., 2010; Chuang et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2011; Agut et al., 2003). There is also a higher representation of female chefs in certain sectors than others, with representation among the elite Michelin starred dining establishment even more marginal (Balazs, 2002; Druckman, 2010; Ko, 2012; Day, 2015). The figures from the current study raise questions as to why so few women progress to head chef in Ireland given equal employment opportunities? Harris & Giuffe (2010) have highlighted that work-family conflict can act as an important, and gendered, mechanism underlying female under-representation in male-dominated occupations. They concluded that the female chefs they studied used three strategies: (1) delaying / forgoing childbearing to succeed as a chef; (2) leave the kitchen for another job in the culinary field; and (3) adapting either work or family life to make the two of them more compatible. However, the current study found no significant relationship between gender and

family constellation, based on marital status or the number of children. Doctoral research currently being undertaken on the absence of female head chefs in Ireland promises to be revelatory.

5.2.2 Age and Education

The majority of head chefs that were surveyed in this study were in their thirties. This fits with previous research which shows that the average age of managers within the hospitality industry is just less than 40 years of age (Ladkin, 2000; Tu et al., 2006; Agut, 2003). The results of this study also showed that as age increased so too did the number of previous positions, the number of years working, the number of years working as a head chef, the number of previous head chef positions, the number of years with their current employer, their marital status and the number of children they had. These findings are what one would expect with the passing of time and add an internal reliability to the study. This study provides empirical data that reaffirms the heuristic or ones intuitive judgement.

The age of a chef also had a significant relationship with the highest educational achievement. There has been a dramatic rise in the percentage of Irish head chefs with degrees in this current study (35%) compared to the (5%) findings of Bolton et al. (2008). These findings add support for the findings of Goyette (2008) for a rising trend for those within the culinary industry to attain degrees within their field. Findings also showed that the older the head chef, the less likely they are to have a degree as the first Culinary Arts degree in Ireland commenced in 1999, giving an average age of the first graduating cohort to be in their early 30s. A limitation of the current study is that the questionnaire did not specify what type of degree respondents possessed and therefore it cannot be assumed that all degrees are within the culinary arts field. For example, one of the nine chefs in Ireland who currently

hold a Michelin star, has no formal culinary training, but has an honours degree in Art History and English, and has nearly completed a PhD in Art History.

5.2.3 *Marital Status*

In conjunction with previous findings most managers in kitchens were married (Wang et al., 2011; Ladkin, 2000; Tu et al., 2006). There was also a significant relationship between marital status and the wages that were earned by head chefs, with the married earning higher wages than those who were single or “other” (which would include partners cohabiting). The literature does show the support of a spouse (Judge et al., 1995) or the wider family (Wang et al., 2011) at home, increases the career success of an individual. However interesting to note was that a married status seemed to convey more objective success in terms of wages than other statuses, be that single or cohabiting. This finding may then have some interaction with the age of managers indirectly. A similar pattern between marital status and the number of years working, the number of years working as head chef and the number of previous head chef positions was found where those married or divorced had more time in these variables also. While these findings may have to do with an interaction with the age of the participant rather than wholly being dependent on their marital status, they may also be influenced by the relatively small number of participants who identified themselves with the option of “other” in the marital status question.

5.2.4 *Career Data*

There was a wide spread in the number of years that head chefs had been working in the industry, with 83% working more than ten years. However 61.8% indicated that they were only working for their current employer for less than five years, 76.5% indicated that they had held one or more previous head chef positions and 81.2% indicated that they had

held more than 4 previous positions in the industry. These findings support the high level of employee turnover that the culinary industry has in Ireland as well as other countries around the world (Sheehan, 2014; Robinson & Barron, 2007; Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Wang et al., 2011). More qualitative data is needed to see why head chefs move positions as turnover is not always seen as a negative aspect in the industry. Research into the frequency of charismatic head chefs taking the whole brigade with them when they leave would also be of interest (Pratten, 2003; Murphy, 2015).

Results also showed that the majority of respondents were working as a head chef only in the last five years, suggesting that while some gain early advancement up the career ladder, the majority take time, gaining experience and years working in the industry, before progressing. During the Celtic Tiger boom years (1995-2007), due to the dramatic rise in new establishments and shortage of chefs, many Irish chefs were prematurely promoted only to find they lacked the required experience and subsequently left the industry.

Other results showed that there was a significant relationship between the number of years working and the number of salary increases, the number of previous positions, the number of years working as a head chef and the number of previous head chef positions. These results are all as expected and show that with increasing time working in the industry the more experience, opportunities and job progression that chefs will gain.

5.2.5 Job Satisfaction and Perspectives on Work

80% of head chefs were either somewhat or totally satisfied with their current position. This finding shows that despite all the bad press about jobs in kitchens those who succeed and progress to the top are satisfied in their work. Previous research had shown that

job satisfaction increases with the number of years working (Tu et al., 2006; Hertzman & Maas, 2012). In this study it was found that the majority of those only working under five years were dissatisfied with their job, those working 6-10 years were totally satisfied in their job and those working more than 10 years were only somewhat satisfied in their jobs. These results actually show a slight decrease in job satisfaction over time after an initial increase. Although Hertzman & Maas (2012) found that the older generations do have more job satisfaction than those newly qualified. This finding may be connected with the amount of time someone is working and be a natural progression in job satisfaction or it may be connected to the era and culture that a person was born into (Lub et al., 2012).

There was also a significant relationship between how people viewed their work and job satisfaction. Those who see their jobs as a personal investment for the good of society experienced more job satisfaction than any other group. Those who saw their job as a journey also experienced more job satisfaction than the remaining 4 groups. Those who saw their jobs as a means to an end experienced the least amount of achievement in their roles. Hall & Chandler (2005) proposed that the outlook a person has in life will affect how they view their own career success. The current study thus highlights how the internal disposition of an individual will colour and influence how they perceive the environment around them. This aspect merits further study.

Another interesting finding was that the perspective a head chef used to view their work also had a significant relationship with their age. Davidson, McPhail & Barry (2011) note that depending on the generation that one is born into, there are differences in work related expectations, values, attitudes and behaviours. They propose four different generations and argue that it cannot be determined if age effects are a consequence of ageing

or of a generational cohort change. Another interpretation comes from the findings of Ko (2012) who found that older employees may have more realistic job expectations and a stronger sense of achievement than younger employees.

5.2.6 Achievement

A very high proportion of respondents (83.5%) felt achievement in their current position. This result was expected as by progressing to the top of the occupational ladder, a head chef was expected to feel a sense of achievement with their career progression, yet it is good to have empirical data to confirm this finding.

5.2.7 Wages

The majority of head chefs were earning €30,001-€40,000 annually. Higher wages was significantly related to the length of a time a chef had been working in the industry. The higher the wages the chefs earned the more job satisfaction they indicated having in work. This result highlights the truth of Arthur et al. (2005) proposition that in reality both objective (wages) and subjective (satisfaction) career success are interdependent. Salary, benefits and fair compensation are noted in research among the top retention drivers for workers and the top drivers for high performance work practices (Bhatnagar, 2007; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Karatepe, 2013).

Interestingly Irish born head chefs earned significantly higher wages than chefs of other nationalities. Hotels also paid head chefs higher wages than restaurants and bakeries. There were also significantly more Irish head chefs working in hotels than people from other nationalities, compared to the situation in restaurants and bakeries. These three findings together raise questions as to whether Irish-born head chefs are paid more because of their

workplace, their birthplace or a combination of both. It also raises questions as to why do more Irish head chefs work in hotels than restaurants? Both Seibert & Kraimer (2001) and Melamed (1996) found that salaries were influenced by the size of the firm in which individuals worked. In general hotels would be catering for larger numbers, and also those that responded from hotels may be from the upper end of the market where customer spend is greater. The star rating, type and size of establishment with number of seats / covers was unaccounted for in the present study. This is a limitation that hinders further level of explanation for the variance in wages. Based on the knowledge that respondents in this survey worked in establishments of varying sizes and quality, an examination of the wages earned would seem to suggest a two tier system, where small to medium mid-level quality places paid their head chefs €30,001 - €40,000 annually while large or high quality dining establishments paid more than €50,001. However this hypothesis would need to be tested by measuring and documenting quality ratings and number of covers for the size of the establishment. The fact that some chefs could also be proprietors or executive head chefs might also affect salary levels.

5.2.8 Nationality

The results of this study found that 32.9% of head chefs working in Ireland indicated that their nationality was not Irish. This figure would fit with the findings of the study by the MRCI (2008) where 35% of the workforce in the Irish hospitality industry was made up of migrant workers. It seems then that there is equal opportunity for progression because if there is 35% of immigrant employees in the workforce and 32.9% of head chefs are immigrants, these figures match. Findings would also indicate a lack of Irish-born bakery head chefs and opportunities for development in this area but would also raise the question from above as to why there are more non-national head chefs in restaurants than hotels?

5.2.9 How the Data was gathered

The current study gathered surveys in a number of different forms, via email, through a third party recruiter and by walking in to premises during the months of May and June 2014. The results showed that how the surveys were gathered showed a significant relationship with wages earned, highest level of education received and the number of years working as head chef. In a small, family run, busy restaurant head chefs may have less staff and more pressure than in larger premises where a head chef has their own office to email responses from and therefore this is a consideration for any future studies of chefs. Emailed responses pre-suppose access to and a level of computer literacy, which is not necessarily widespread. Computer skills were one of the areas both culinary arts students and recent graduates were dissatisfied with in a Canadian study (Muller et al., 2009).

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The size of establishments surveyed was not measured, nor quality ratings, market segmentation and type of degree held, which may have added a further level of explanation to data and should be considered in future research.

6. Conclusion

The current study concludes by raising questions as to why so few women progress to the top in a kitchen. A low tenure in head chefs' current position adds impetus to the argument about a high level of turnover in the industry. This raises questions as to whether there are any strategies or interventions for talent management (Hughes & Rog, 2008) and retention that can be implemented to reduce turnover or whether it is an inevitable outcome

of the nature of the industry. Further qualitative studies as to the reasons for head chefs changing positions or employers would be beneficial.

Industry should be aware that head chefs of Irish nationality are being paid more than head chefs of other nationalities. However, this finding is also mediated by the fact that head chefs in hotels were paid more than those working in restaurants and bakeries and there were a greater percentage of Irish-born head chefs working in hotels. Therefore this higher pay may be explained by the size of the establishment as hotels generally have to cater for a larger number of people. Further research should also ensure that the size of the establishment in the hospitality industry and its quality rating may impact on findings and these should be measured. This finding also raises questions for further research as to why wages differ among hotels and restaurants. Also why are there more non-nationals working as head chef in restaurants and bakeries rather than hotels? Another factor that might be examined is whether Irish born head chefs had worked abroad and if so what benefit, if any, this had on their career. Further research should also consider that how the data is collected from the hospitality industry will impact the scope, reliability and findings.

The dramatic rise in head chefs gaining degrees compared to an earlier Irish study (Bolton et al., 2008) and to international studies (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Zopiatis, 2010) is extremely significant. The transformation of culinary education from vocational to liberal appears to have been pioneered in Ireland (Hegarty, 2004, 2011; Mac Con Iomaire, 2008), but is beginning to be replicated internationally (Gustafsson, 2009; Deutsch, 2014) with new programmes emerging in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This phenomenon merits further study.

The current study has investigated the profile of head chefs in the Irish food industry and illuminated their background, demographics and career data. This study may benefit educators, employers, recruitment agencies, and policy makers as to the current state in the Irish culinary industry and highlights some interesting questions that may provoke further scholarship both in Ireland and internationally.

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