

National College of Ireland

An exploratory analysis of occupational stress amongst Chefs in Ireland; The adverse consequences for their personal life

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Dedicated to my fellow MBA NCI students class of 2013 - “*we had a right auld laugh*”

1 Abstract

Despite the growing glamorisation of the chef profession in recent years through various television documentaries, there is a shortage of chefs in Ireland. The profession while attracting new entrants to train in the area is failing to retain them (Irish Examiner 2012). Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) completed research in Northern Ireland which examined the causes and consequences of occupational stress for chefs. The research findings noted that chefs working in Northern Ireland were experiencing high levels of occupational stress and the causes included role overload, bullying, and poor relationship with manager and poor working conditions e.g. cramped working environment. This research seeks to expand on the research conducted by Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) to examine occupational stress amongst chefs in the Republic of Ireland. The research will look at both the causes and consequences of stress for this group and seek to provide recommendations on foot of its findings.

The research sample consists of three in-depth interviews, with experienced chef managers who have worked in this area for fifteen years on average. The interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks and were recorded and transcribed for the purposes of analysis. A thematic approach was taken to identification of causes and consequences of occupational stress.

The findings suggest that poor relationship with manager, physically working environment and lack of training are some of the causes while not being able to switch off after work, not enough time for other activities and not sufficient time for significant others and friends were included in the findings for consequences.

The dissertation concludes with a number of practical recommendations for both individuals and employers. These include regular discussions between subordinates and managers, reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees and introduction of wellbeing classes. These measures should help reduce occupational stress.

The author suggests that future research may include researching occupational stress for junior chefs and from the perspective of the employer to ascertain their level of awareness of the stress levels experienced by staff and the measures in place to assist them.

1.1 Declaration

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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2 Contents

1	Abstract	i
1.1	Declaration	ii
3	Introduction.....	1
4	Literature Review	4
4.1	Definition of Stress.....	4
4.1.1	Definitions Linked to Physiological Factor	4
4.1.2	Definitions Linked to External Factors	5
4.1.3	Definitions Linked to Environmental Factors.....	5
4.1.4	Discourse in the Literature on Stress.....	5
4.1.5	Eustress	6
4.1.6	Summary	6
4.2	Models of Occupational Stress.....	7
4.2.1	Demand Control Model	7
4.2.2	Person-Environment Fit	8
4.2.3	The Transactional Model	9
4.3	Stress Appraisal.....	11
4.4	Occupational Related Causes of Stress	13
4.4.1	Role Conflict & Role Ambiguity	13
4.4.2	Role Overload & Burnout.....	14
4.4.3	Responsibility for Other Staff.....	15
4.4.4	Violence.....	16
4.4.5	Bullying.....	17
4.4.6	Working Conditions.....	17
4.4.7	Compensation	18
4.4.8	Senior Chefs	18
4.4.9	Increase in Occupational Stress for Chefs.....	18
4.5	Controlling Stress	19
4.6	Literature Review Conclusion	20
5	Research Methodology.....	22
5.1	Philosophical Concepts	22
5.2	Data Collection	24
5.3	Research Ethics	25
5.4	Sample Population	26
5.5	The Participants.....	26

5.5.1	Participant A.....	26
5.5.2	Participant B.....	27
5.5.3	Participant C.....	27
5.6	Research Limitations	28
6	Research Findings	29
6.1	Introduction to RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	29
6.2	Causes of Occupational Stress – The Findings	30
6.2.1	Role Overload & Burnout.....	30
6.2.2	Relationship with Manager	31
6.2.3	Physical Environment.....	33
6.2.4	Pregnancy.....	33
6.2.5	Training Issues.....	34
6.2.6	Poor Collaboration	35
6.2.7	Management of Staff	36
6.2.8	Financial Pressures – under resourced	37
6.2.9	Dependency on Suppliers	37
6.3	Consequences of Occupational Stress	37
6.3.1	Unable To Switch off After Work	37
6.3.2	Insufficient Time Outside of Work	38
6.3.3	Negative Emotions	39
6.3.4	Reduced Desire for Social Activities.....	40
6.3.5	Further Comments from Participant in Relation to the Hospitality Industry	40
7	Recommendations.....	42
7.1	Improve Manager and Subordinate Relationship	42
7.2	Training	42
7.3	Improve Work-Life Balance.....	43
7.4	Make Reasonable Accommodations for Pregnant Employees	44
7.5	Introduction of Well-being Classes	44
8	Conclusion	45
9	References.....	48

3 Introduction

Treven (2005) states that there are over 100m workdays lost each year due to stress and that 50 to 75% of diseases can be linked to stress. The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work points out that stress is the second most common problem in work which impacts up to 28% of employees. Occupational stress has a big impact for all stakeholders; family, partners, friends, employees and employers – it is important that we understand it and give it our attention in terms of research.

The research topic for this dissertation is *An Exploratory analysis of occupational stress amongst Chefs in Ireland; the adverse consequences for their personal life*. Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) completed research on this topic in Northern Ireland and the author has now updated the research and applied it to a different jurisdiction, that being chefs working in Ireland. The research question aims to inform what is causing occupational stress for chef in Ireland in 2013 and the adverse impact it has on their personal life.

The dissertation question is an important piece of research for several reasons. Firstly there are many chefs who are working throughout Ireland, it is not an uncommon profession and the profession has gained kudos within the last decade, partly due to the rise of the ‘TV/media personality’ chef. If young people are to enter into this career, it is important that we have an understanding of what is causing occupational stress for current chefs in the industry and if we know this, can the employers, managers and chefs control certain items which contribute to the stress e.g. reduced working hours.

As previously stated, Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) conducted research in 2007 in Northern Ireland in relation to causes of occupational stressors for chefs. The findings of the research reported that stress levels were higher than in previous research. Common causes of

stressors were excessive workload, feeling undervalued and communication issues. This is evidence which shows that occupation stress is a problem amongst chefs. There is no evidence of research conducted for the Republic of Ireland and research conducted by Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) is now 5 years old. Therefore it is incumbent on us as researchers to examine the potential causes of stress and propose solutions to alleviate stress.

The rationale for choosing this research topic includes the author has worked in the hospitality industry for 10 years, has access to chefs for research and the author now works in HR, so has some knowledge about occupational stress. The research aims to identify what are the causes for occupational stress for chefs who are working in Ireland in 2013 and what are the consequences for personal life. Further to this, it has been reported that there is a shortage of chefs in Ireland (Irish Examiner 2012) and as researchers we must determine if the perception and experience of the chef profession is having an adverse impact on young people not wishing to join the profession.

The author has conducted three in-depth interviews with chefs. All three chefs work in managerial positions. Two are male and one is female. The age group spans from 30 to 45. Two of the chefs work in multi outlet organisations i.e. restaurant/catering/retail and restaurant/catering. The third chef works for a cookery school.

This paper begins with a literature review, which includes; definitions of stress, literature regarding models of stress, literature concerning stress appraisal, and occupational related causes of stress literature

The next part of the dissertation will deal with the research methodology, which includes philosophical concepts, data collection methods and research ethics. The author believes

that the qualitative approach will provide more rich findings as opposed to using quantitative research. The richer data includes voice tone, body language and emotion. Data collection was achieved by interviews, recording the conversations and then transcribing the content.

The following chapter deals with the research findings. The findings detailed in this paper, which are grouped into themes, in relation to causes of occupational stress include poor collaboration, relation with manager, working environment, pregnancy and role overload. The consequences include not enough time outside of work, unable to stop thinking about work and discussing it and experiencing a variety of different negative emotions.

The next chapter discusses recommendations from the author, which outlines way to reduce occupation stress, based on the findings. The author has made the following recommendations; improve manger and subordinate relationship, increased employer focus in work life balance, training, reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees and introduction of wellbeing classes.

Interesting to note that Antonovsky (1980) argues that stressors are an inherent part of the experience for humans and this paper will later detail some of the occupational stressors experienced by chefs working in Ireland.

4 Literature Review

In the world of academia, much has been written about what stress is and there are models of stress which will be discussed in this paper. Definitions of stress have been grouped into physiological, external and environmental factors.

4.1 Definition of Stress

4.1.1 Definitions Linked to Physiological Factor

Employees who are stressed may not be co-operative and can develop a dependency for drugs and alcohol (Marthu et al 2007). This is also noted by the research conducted by Gibbons and Gibbons (2007).

Schmidt (2001) tells us that the word stress is regularly used in everyday life and when we hear the word at first, it makes us think of something which is not pleasant and that we have no control over it. Schmidt (2001) further points out that stress is something which has helped people to survive for millennia, yet today it is considered as a significant enemy. Schmidt (2001) informs us that stress has been the cause for sickness, accidents, early deaths, dissatisfaction, tensions and it has also caused losses for the economy.

Lazarus and Monat (1977) argue that it is more convenient to group stress into psychological, physiological and social types. They further point out that the problems in defining stress as either a response or a stimulus or an interaction of the two.

Ivanchevich and Matteson (1993) define stress as "*adopted response of a person as a reflection of their diversity and/or psychological processes to activities, states, or events in the environment creating psychological and physical needs*".

4.1.2 Definitions Linked to External Factors

Mathur, Vigg, Sandhar and Holani (2007) argue that stress is a general term applied to the various pressures that people experience in life. They tell us that when the pressures build up, they can cause adverse emotions and physical conditions. When stress builds up, employees can develop stress symptoms, which can have an adverse impact on their health and performance at work. People who experience stress can become nervous and tend to worry a lot. They cannot relax and get angry easily.

Greenberg and Baron (2000) argue that stress is a response to external demands which results in a complex pattern of emotional stress, physiological reactions and related thoughts. They call the demands stressors and the examples of stressors include work and relationships.

4.1.3 Definitions Linked to Environmental Factors

Looker and Gregson (1993) argue that nobody is free from stress and it can affect everybody. Stress occurs due to the consequences of our relations with our constantly changing environment and due to the changing environment, people have to adapt to it.

4.1.4 Discourse in the Literature on Stress

However Sharit and Salvendy (1982) argue that stress has many facets and most of them are not represented in the definitions which are documented in the literature. Rather the definitions reflect biases to the scientific orientation of the authors (Sharit & Salvendy 1982)

Interesting to note that McLean (1974) and Hinkle (1973) argue that the term is pointless and should be abandoned. Bicknell and Liefoghe (2010) tell us that there are unconnected definitions of stress in literature and there is contention; stress is a contested discourse.

4.1.5 Eustress

It is important to point out that there is good stress, known as eustress. The American Stress Institute point out that the term eustress comes from Seyle (1976) and give the example that a passionate kiss and thinking about what may follow, may be stressful, but not the same type of stress when having a root canal. Seyle (1976) first used the term eustress and argues that it is a process which results in a positive outcome. Cooper and Dewe (2004) argue that eustress happens when increased endocrine activity prepares the individual for fight or flight, however they point out that much literature refers to eustress as good stress and outside of endocrinology there is little theory about how it leads to better performance. Williams and Cooper (2002) point out that endocrine responses can sharpen the mind and the barriers held back the individual are removed. Elkin (1999) points out that the right amount of stress “sets a beautiful tone”.

The common theme from the various definitions is the individual and the environment and the consequence of this relationship. This research detailed later in this dissertation seeks to examine the impact that the chef progression has on stress levels reported by chefs. In relation to occupational stress it is interesting to note that Mathur et al (2007) point out that there is emerging evidence that companies can be held responsible for the emotional and physical impact of occupational stress which is experienced by employees. Given the potential employer liability, this is an area worth of consideration from a research perspective.

4.1.6 Summary

Several definitions of stress have been discussed in this paper. Marthu et al (2007) point out that stress is a general term applied to the various pressures in life. The can certainly be linked into the research which is later discussed. Looker and Gregson (1993) argue that

stress is due to our relations with an environment which is constantly changing, again this can link into the research findings. Chefs are experiencing occupational stress, caused by a variety of reasons; long working hours, bullying, violence, poor relationship with manager and difficult working conditions. This is further discussed in the literature review and research findings.

We will now review some of the literature in relation to the models of occupational stress.

4.2 Models of Occupational Stress

There are 2 main categories of occupational stress. The international models include demand control model and the person-environment model. The second main category is the transactional model. The demand control (Karaek 1976) argues that the job environment can be group regarding two different dimensions – the psychological demands at work and how much control and individual has to meet these demands. The person-environment fit model examines the shared influence of the person and environment factors on outcomes. The transactional model deals with the judgment process regarding the person and the environment.

4.2.1 Demand Control Model

The first model that this paper will discuss is Karaeks' (1979) demand control model. The model points out that any job environment can be characterised regarding two dimensions, which are psychological demands at work and how much control workers have to meet with these demands (Karasek 1979, 1989, Karasek & Theorell 1990). The prediction of the model can argue that high demands in a job can lead to high levels of stress. However if an individual has control over their job, this can help in reducing the stress levels experienced at work. Shultz, Wang, Crimmins and Fisher (2010) argue that research in the past 2 decades both on individual and large studies have provided some support for the demand-

control model. Yet Taris (2006) argues that most research advocates the main impacts of demand and control, but the research does not touch on the interactions between demand and control and stress outcomes. Shultz et al (2010) points out that Karaek's (1979) theory is focused on psychological demands. Many studies on the demand control model have focused on physical demands as well as mental demands (Beehr, Glaser, Canali & Wallwey 2001). Gangster and Murphy (2000) argue that control in work can have 2 definitions. One is job decision latitude which concerns personal discretion and the job skill level. The second is about being able to influence the work environment and therefore influence the outcomes at work.

This paper has already pointed out Beeher et al (2001) argument that many studies have focused on the physical as well as psychological demands when researching the demand control model. One of the aims of this study is to determine what the occupational stressors are for chefs working in Ireland. The research in this paper will examine physical demands such as cramped working conditions, high temperatures and long working hours, resulting in occupational stress. Psychological demands may be reported also, these may include bullying, poor relationships at work and pressure to adopt the 'normal' behaviour in the kitchen. The control demand model will assist the research in terms of grouping various demands into physical and psychological factors.

4.2.2 Person-Environment Fit

The person-environment fit model (P-E) looks at the shared influence of the person and environment factors on particular outcomes. The P-E model predicts outcomes based on the fit between the person and the environment (Livingstone, Nelson & Barr 1997). Personal characteristics relevant to the model include values and abilities and for the environment relevant characteristics include supplied and demands (French, Caplan &

Harrison 1982). Fit can be defined as the degree of similarity or compatibility between the person and environment elements, which is measured on the same conceptual dimension (Livingstone et al 1997). Schneider (2001) argues that the P-E fit model is considered to be one of the dominant conceptual forces in the arena of interactional psychology. McCarthy, Lambert and Brack (1997) argue that stress does not reside in the person or in the environment but in the interaction between the two.

As previously stated, personal characteristics linked to the P-E fit model include values and abilities. How can this be linked into chefs and the levels of stress that they experience at work? Values may determine how a head chef will treat their team in the kitchen. Will they be comfortable and believe it is right to shout and curse each time a minor mistake is made or rather point out the error and realise the one of the many roles of the head chef include being a mentor and a coach. Like any profession, some individuals may have higher abilities than others in terms of managing factors which cause occupational stressors. For chefs, these include long working hours and not spending enough time with family and friends. Can peoples' values and abilities be adapted, so as to cope better with stressful work situations?

4.2.3 The Transactional Model

In relation to the transactional model, Lazarus and Launier (1978), points out that the term transaction, views stress as a relational with nature. Stress is not solely in the person or the environment, but instead is in conjunction between the two (Lazarus 1990). Stress happens due the judgment that environmental demands are about to impact or exceed the person's resources (Holroyd & Lazarus 1982). There is a judgment process which involves the person and the environment, and there are two important appraisal processes. The first appraisal is where the individual appraises the situation as harmful or threatening. The

second appraisal is concerned with what can be done and how best to deal with the encounter (Dewe 1997). Folkman (1984) points out that in any situation, both processes are greatly dependent. When stress is defined in transactional terms, attention moves from searching for that one measure which captures the 'stress of the stress processes, to developing a number of measures which capture the essence of the stress process (Lazarus 1990). Coping theory literature according to Grooms & Leahy (2002) has defined types of coping which vary according to how a person deals with stress. Although researches differ regarding the names for the various styles, the most common coping dispositions are problem focused, emotion evidenced and avoidance (Billings & Moos, 1984; Endler & Parker, 1990; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984a; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Skodol, 1998; Snyder & Dinoff, 1999; Stone, Helder, & Schneider, 1988).

Cooper, Dewe and O'Driscoll (2001) argue that there are three main themes regarding the transactional model. These themes are a dynamic cognitive state, a disruption or imbalance in normal functioning and finally the resolution of that disruption or imbalance. The transactional model of coping has been widely accepted in studies (Hunter & Boyle 2004; Irvin 2001).

It is interesting to note that Lavee and Katz (2003) argue that all psychological processes have a cultural component and now psychologists now realise that what was once believed to be universal in psychology, may be true in the west, but may not be true in all populations (Markus & Kitayama 1991). The effect of occupational stress on employees from different cultures may be similar, however the forms of stressors may be different (Sawang, Oei & Goh 2006). The reason why this point is of interest, is that research in a

different jurisdiction, may reveal different stressors from this piece of research and therefore makes the argument for further research.

Dewe (1997) points out that the second part of the transactional model is concerned with what can be done and how best to deal with a particular situation. Can this be linked back into the P-E model in terms of the personal characteristics – will chefs with greater abilities be able to react better when there is a stressful situation?

This paper will now examine the stress appraisal concept.

4.3 Stress Appraisal

Groomes and Leahy (2002) point out that there are four main components in the stress appraisal process and that these are constantly discussed in stress and coping literature (Chaturvedi, 1983; Cox & Ferguson, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984b; Paterson & Neufeld, 1989; Shontz, 1975).

The first component is the extent to which the person appraises the situation as stressful, and it is regularly called primary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984b). If a person believes that a particular situation is not stressful, then they will make an irrelevant appraisal of the situation and there is no requirement to employ a coping mechanism (Grooms & Leahy 2002)

If however the person believes that the situation is stressful, then the second component of the appraisal process is initiated and is concerned with the type of stress appraisal. People will view the situation as stressful if they believe they will be harmed, threatened or challenged (Grooms & Leahy 2002).

The third component is concerned with the level of experience about the stressful situation and it relates to how often a person experiences the stressful situation and this can have an impact on the consequences for the person. Shontz (1975) points out that stressful situations can become less stressful as the person becomes more familiar with the situation and become more effective with coping with the situation. A person will encounter less consequences as they experience the situation more often (Grooms & Leahy 2002).

The final component of the situation is concerned with the location of the difficulty or where there is uncertainty in the situation. The concept involves a person's perception about whether the source of the difficulty or uncertainty is located in them or is external. If the source of the stress is external, people may feel more consequences to their wellbeing (Grooms & Leahy 2002).

Other research regarding stress appraisal has looked at the predictive utility of stress appraisals on the completion of tasks, which included counting backwards (Schneider, 2004, Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993) and delivering a video- taped speech (Lyons & Schneider, 2005). The research showed that the threat did predict poorer performance relative to the task.

In summary, if a person believes that they will be harmed, threatened or challenged, then the situation becomes stressful. This can be linked into violence and bullying which is later detailed in this paper. It can also be connected to tough working conditions for chefs which some may find challenging and this results in occupational stress.

This paper will now review some of the literature in relation to work related causes of stress

4.4 Occupational Related Causes of Stress

Treven (2005) argues that work settings can be stressful for employees and that some jobs expose the employees to high levels of stress and other jobs have only low levels of stress. .

The type of job that an employee has can dictate how stressful the employee may find the job. Treven (2005) note that stressful jobs include a fire-fighter, surgeon and senior executives and those less stressful jobs include the accountancy profession. This chapter examines some of the common causes of occupational stress and these some of the causes are detailed later in the research and have also been discussed in the Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research. Here follows an illustration of some of the commons causes of occupational stress:

<i>Causes of Occupational Stress</i>	
Role Overload & Burnout	Responsibility for other staff
Role Conflict & Ambiguity	Violence
Bullying	Working Conditions
Compensation	Holding Senior positions

4.4.1 Role Conflict & Role Ambiguity

Brewer (1999) argues that employees are more successful in work if they know what is expected of them. If they do not know what is expected of them, then role conflict can occur, this is where the employee has several different and inconsistent demands. Role ambiguity can be a stressor for some employees; this is where the employee is uncertain as to what is expected of them. Chefs who climb the career ladder are responsible for many more duties, not just cooking. These include menu planning, budgets, managing people and compliance; this is a good example where there are constant inconsistent demands.

4.4.2 Role Overload & Burnout

Burnout can be linked to role overload as previously pointed out by Treven (2005). Role overload can lead to stress at work and there are 2 types of role overload. Quantitative overload occurs when employees are asked to do more than they can do in a specific time period. Qualitative overload is when the employee does not believe that they have the skills and abilities to do the job.

Orphanides and Zopiatis (2009) argue that burnout research first emerged in the 1970's, as it was now impacting many professions. Before burnout research became common, Bradley (1969) points out that burnout is an extreme form of stress. Orphanides and Zopiatis (2009) tell us that definitions of burnout increased in the 1980's, and that the 3 significant elements of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Mathur and Vigg et al (2007) point out "*Work overload and time deadlines put employees under pressure and lead to stress. Often some of these pressures arise from supervision and poor quality of supervision and poor quality of supervision can cause stress*". Altum (2002) point out that burnout is not a symptom of occupational stress, rather is the end result of occupational stress which is not managed and also it has been described as a psychological syndrome, which can emerge when workers are exposed to a stressful working situation, where job demands are high and resources are low (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

Rowley and Purcell (2001) researched occupational stress and burnout in the Northern Ireland hospitality industry. When interviewing the various different professions in the hospitality industry, chefs experienced one of the highest burns out rates. Interesting to

note that other research reports have the same findings, i.e. Thomas (2001) and Conte, Ringenbach, Moran and Landy (2001). Maslach (1993) defines burnout as "*a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal achievement that can occur among individuals who work with other people*". Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) point out that burned out chefs frequently consume too much unhealthy foods, alcohol and drugs, they also experienced fatigue, emotional exhaustion and believed that they had low levels of achievement. According to Shirom (1989) there are two core symptoms of burnout. Firstly, there is emotional exhaustion, which refers to energy depletion or the draining of emotional resources. Next there is depersonalization, which refers to the development of negative, cynical attitudes towards the recipients of a persons' care or service.

Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) further point out that the burn out results in a feeling of being out of control and the problem is made worse by poor management and the work which is associated with a commercial kitchen. Pratten (2003) argues that hours in the chef profession are long, anti-social and can involve split shifts. The problem can be compounded if employees have a long commute to work. Days off are usually during the week, as weekends are usually the busy time for the hospitality business. Pratten (2003) continue to point out that the hours experienced by chefs can impact adversely on personal relationships and then this results in pressure to move to an organisation with more social hours e.g. hospital canteen. The problem here is that the quality and skills required are much less than a restaurant.

4.4.3 Responsibility for Other Staff

Responsibility for other employees can be a major stressor, as those with responsibility, usually managers have to communicate, mentor & coach, feedback and reward. Udovicic

(2004) argue that responsibility for others is a burden that all managers have to bear, but they may feel happier if they can accept self-motivation of co-workers. Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research stated that senior chefs experience occupational stress as they are responsible for managing staff. The research findings detailed in this paper document that managing people can be a cause of occupational stress.

4.4.4 Violence

Mobbing and violence in the workplace is a significant source of stress. Treven (2005) defines it as "...repeated, improper treatment of employees and may threaten their health and safety". A 2001 EU survey reported that 9% of employees were victims of harassment in the workplace.

A survey conducted by John and Menzel (1999) stated that physical abuse experienced by chefs at work was very common. The survey looked at the environment, noted that often it was a stressful situation. The reasons for the stressful situation included the physical environment i.e. crowded, hot and noisy. Pratten (2003) state the reasons for the poor conditions are due to cramped work spaces, no fresh air, and high temperatures, particularly in the summer. Psychological factors were also noted in the report, for example chefs felt that they had to adhere to the normal behaviours in the kitchen. The survey reported that the head chef's aggressive behaviour was attributed to the artistic nature; therefore this is normal and should be accepted. Pratten (2003) state that kitchens are well known for their discipline and this is partly due to attention to detail, which is required for quality food. Richardson (2002), reported that kitchens have a "*long tradition of culinary authoritarianism*". The research will detail some observations made by one the Participants with regard to violence.

4.4.5 Bullying

Notelaers, Baillien, De Witte, Elinarsen and Vermunt (2012) point out that over the last decade, attention on bullying at work has significantly increased, with large volumes of literature, examining prevalence, consequences and antecedents. The work environment hypothesis has meant that reports of bullying at work may be attributed to poor working environment. A significant number of studies have reported a list of related factors which are linked with bullying at work. These include low job control, high demands, role ambiguity, reduced social support and job insecurity (Baillien and De Witte, 2009; Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen ,1994; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007; Hubert, Furda & Steensma, 2001; Leymann, 1996; Neyens, Baillien & De Witte, 2007; Notelaers and De Witte, 2003; Opdebeeck, Pelemans & Van Meerbeeck., 2002; Vartia, 1996; Zapf, 1999a; Zapf and Gross, 2001). Moayed, Daraiseh and Shell (2006) argues that the list of psycho-social job characteristics linked to bullying is extensive, however most studies report only bivariate relationships and are lacking in theoretical rationale (Acquino & Thau 2009). Hauge et al (2007) makes the argument that this means that our understanding of the relationship between job characteristics and bullying is fragmented and limited.

4.4.6 Working Conditions

Liena -Nozal (2009) points out that working conditions can have an adverse impact on psychosocial aspects of work. Certain working conditions may contribute to stress and be bad for ones' health. Liena -Nozal (2009) further points out that there is little theoretical work in literature regarding the link between working conditions and mental health. The

research findings of this paper will document how working conditions experienced have been a cause of occupational stress. Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) reported in their research that conditions such as cramped working spaces, high temperatures and poor ventilation have been causes of occupational stress.

4.4.7 Compensation

In relation to pay, Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) state that a National Skills Task Force report (1999), reported that hospitality employees in Northern Ireland earn only 68% of national average earnings. Pratten (2003) reports that pay for chefs is not high, yet in the report, a spokesman for the hospitality company Six Continents, does state that pay will depend on the type of outlet, location and skills required for the job

4.4.8 Senior Chefs

Pratton (2003) point out that as chefs climb the career ladder and become head chefs, they experience pressure due to administrative requirements, rather than cooking in the kitchen. The head chef has a host of new responsibilities which mean less time in the kitchen. For example, menus have to be planned and it is important to note that a kitchen may have several menus e.g. a la carte, table d'hôtel, group & tour menus and seasonal menus e.g. Christmas. Head chefs are responsible for the recruitment and training of new staff and have to manage all staff in relation to rosters, coaching, performance management and employee issues e.g. underperformance and absenteeism. Chefs at this level also have the pressure of being awarded stars and rosettes and then ensuring that these awards are maintained.

4.4.9 Increase in Occupational Stress for Chefs

Smith and Carroll (2006) point out that occupational stress depends on the situation and how the individual can cope with stress. They inform us that stress amongst chefs has

increased over the last 20 years, and the increase in stress levels is greater than other occupations. They further point out that many chefs work overtime, and many chefs work 65 hours per week. Smith and Carroll (2006) point out that trade union membership is much lower in the chef profession, compared to other professions. Pratton (2003), does point out that it is easier than ever before to enter the profession, but there are many obstacles on the way such has long working hours, low pay for some and in some kitchens, bullying and violence is common.

This paper will now examine some of the literature regarding controlling stress.

4.5 Controlling Stress

Brymer, Perrewer and John (1991) conducted research regarding stress in the hospitality industry and noted that there was significant evidence of stress; indicators were physical, behavioural and cognitive. They note in their research that having a sense of control will help to reduce the stress. Interesting to note that Marshall (1986) giving employees more control and freedom will increase motivation with regard to work. Faulkner and Patiar (1997) states that if employees in the hospitality industry are empowered, then this will help to manage stress levels. Aspinwall and Taylor (1997) point that controlling stress can be pro-active instead of reactive and that people can function to recognise anticipated stress and its effects. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that coping includes all of the behaviours and cognitions adopted by the person, which is in some way designed to deal with the experience and its consequences. Controlling stress with regard to problems is about solving the problem at the source of stress, whereas controlling emotional stress is concerned with dealing with the adverse emotional consequences of stress (Folkman 1984).

4.6 Literature Review Conclusion

This paper has looked at several definitions of stress which have been grouped into factors. These being physiological, external and environmental factors. Regarding the physiological factor, Schmidt (2001) tells us that stress has been the cause for sickness, early deaths and tensions. Do these adverse consequences impact those who are less equipped to deal with stressful situations? The chapter which deals with recommendations in this paper recommends well-being classes. Perhaps well-being classes will help stressed chef's better deal with stress from a physiological standpoint.

Looker and Gregson (1993) argue that stress can occur due to the constantly changing environment. This can be linked into the physical work environment, where conditions are not adequate for a long working day. Inadequate working conditions are detailed in the research findings of this paper and have been documented in the research completed by Gibbons and Gibbons (2007).

Karaeks (1979) demand control model looks at the psychological demands at work and how much control workers have to meet these demands. This would mean that some chefs are better able to deal with all the pressures that the profession can have at times. The person environment fit examines the shared influence of the person and environment factors on particular outcomes (Livingstone, Nelson & Barr 1997) Personal characteristics of the P-E fit model include abilities and values. Again, some chefs are better able to deal with stressful situations at work.

The literature reviewed has examined cause of occupational stress. These include role overload, bullying, responsibility for other staff, working conditions and violence. All of these factors are later discussed in the chapter which deals with the research findings.

McGrath (1970) states that stress is a significant imbalance between demand and response capability , under conditions where failure to meet demand has important consequences. Is the profession making too many demands of chefs today?

The next section of the paper will deal with research methodology.

5 Research Methodology

5.1 Philosophical Concepts

In advance of choosing any research methodology for a dissertation, it is important to understand the philosophical concepts and which is the concept the author will prescribe for this particular research.

Quinlan (2011), points out that there are several philosophical frameworks. Positivism holds the view that there is one objective reality and that reality is separate from consciousness and is singular. In contrast, constructivism the social phenomena develop in social contexts and people create their own realities in part. Interpretivism, this concept argues that all knowledge is open to interpretation. Hermeneutics is concerned with the theory and the study of the processes of interpretation. Structuralism argues that human culture can be understood as a system of signs. Critical theory will critique and examine society, the goal is to reveal systems of which are dominant and, through focusing on values and norms.

If the aim of a dissertation is to establish facts, then there is scope of the philosophical framework to be positivism – here the reality is objective and singular and it may be able to answer questions with quantitative data (Quinlan 2011). Collis and Hussey (2009) states that positivism comes from the natural sciences and is singular and objective and that this view of the world is not impacted by any investigations. “*Every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof*”, (Walliman 2001). Smith (1983) argues that until the late 19th century, research was concentrated on inanimate objects in the physical world, which includes physics, which is concerned with properties manner and energy and the interaction between the two. The systematic approaches used by the scientists involved experiment and observation.

Inductive logic was applied to discover explanatory theories that could be used for prediction, their beliefs about the word were based on positivism, which has its roots in a philosophy called realism.

On the other hand the Interpretivism and the constructivist frameworks is concerned with reality which is unique to people and thy way that people will have different interpretations and feelings of the world. Interviewees will respond to the interviewer in a different and unique way. This form of collecting data, due to its uniqueness is qualitative data (Quinlan 2011). Collis and Hussey (2009) argue that Interpretivism believes that social reality is not objective, but instead it is subjective because it is determined by people's individual perceptions.

For this particular research the author has conducted three in- depth interviews with chefs, so that the research can identify the feelings and unique experiences of the interviewees. Therefore the author has adopted an interpretivism paradigm for the dissertation and all data collected is qualitative data. The author wishes to fully understand the feelings and experiences of the interviewees. This has been achieved by conducting the in depth interviews, which has not only recorded the verbal responses, but has also recorded and observed the non- verbal communication such as body language, emotion and tone of voice. Also, the reason for choosing the interpretivism paradigm will has shed light on the interviewee's ability to cope with their environment, this can be linked into the person- environment fit model. In relation to paradigms, Kuhn (1962) defines them as "*Paradigms are universally recognised scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners*"

Interpretivism research aims to describe, translate and understand the meaning and not the frequency of natural occurring phenomena in the social world (Van Maanen 1983). Interpretivism has the following features; uses small samples, natural locations, is concerned with generating theories, it produces data which is rich and subjective, findings have high validity and low reliability, allows findings to be generalised from one setting to another similar setting (Collis & Hussey 2009). These features can be linked into the authors three in-depth interviews, which will allow for data which is rich in subjectivity and has a high validity factor.

5.2 Data Collection

The author has chosen to conduct three in depth interviews, the data collection method being one-to-one interviews. The reason for doing in depth interviews as opposed to surveys, is that the interviews have allowed the author to capture so much more data, which could not have been captured in surveys. This additional data is body language, eye contact, pauses, voice tone and emotions. This type of data simply cannot be captured by doing online surveys.

Quinlan (2011) points out that there are many options available for collecting the data which include observation, participant observation, one-to-one interviews, telephone interviews, group interviews, postal/online questionnaires, focus groups, internet research, scales, visual methods, semiotics, experiments and oral history. When it comes to the interpretive paradigm, interviews are about exploring data in relation to understandings, opinions, attitudes, feelings and what people remember doing (Arskey & Knight 1999).

In relation to one-to-one interviews, Quinlan (2011) makes the following points regarding this process for data collection. The process has many advantages and it is a common method for collecting data. A rapport can be established between the interviewer and the interviewee and the interviewer has an opportunity for explaining the reason for the research in detail. The interviewer can observe the responses from the interviewee, which can include tone and body language. Quinlan (2011) further points out that as the process is a social engagement, the interviewer must have the ability to engage with the interviewee. One very important point that Quinlan (2011) notes is that the interviewer, must not attempt to influence the interviewee. Collis and Hussey (2009) argue that an interview is a method for collection primary data, the interviewees are asked questions, so as to determine what they think, do or feel.

In conducting the interviews, the author recorded the conversations and post the interviews up written up the main messages of the materiel, grouping it into themes regarding the causes and consequences of occupational stress.

5.3 Research Ethics

“Ethics can be defined very simply as a process of reasoning in terms of the right thing to do” (Quinlan 2011).

The researcher needs to understand what are the possible risks in terms of how the researcher engages and the level of standards throughout the project (Quinlan 2011). Factors to be considered concerning ethics include do not harm, integrity, plagiarism, validity, power and transparency (Quinlan 2011).

Quinlan (2011) makes the important point that anonymity and confidentiality are of the utmost importance, Confidentiality is where there has been a guarantee given by the researcher to the individual (s) who participated, that their contribution will be confidential. Importantly as well, any person who participates in research must give their informed consent, after the researcher has explained all of the salient points, which include nature of the research, the nature and extent of their participation and any potential consequences that could arise from their participation.

5.4 Sample Population

The Participants in this research were recruited by family association and through work. Two are relatives of the author and the third is an employee for a company which provides catering solutions to the company where the author is employed.

All three are chef managers, two males and one female. Two are in the age group 30 to 40 and the third is in the age group 40 to 50.

All three have at least 15 years' experience as working as chefs. Interviews were conducted as a discussion and the Participants were asked to tell the author about what has caused them occupational stress and how the consequences for their personal lives. Interviews were conducted in Meath and Dublin and duration ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes.

5.5 The Participants

5.5.1 Participant A

Participant A is male, age group 30 to 40 and has worked as a chef for 25 years. The Participant currently works for an organisation which is retail, catering and has a restaurant. They act as group chef and are involved in all aspects of the food business. The causes of stress outlined by the Participant are experienced not only with their current job, but

experiences have been shared regarding previous positions. The Participant is involved in other activities outside of their employment. They have their own food business and provide services to another organisation – marketing Irish food abroad. This is a managerial position and Pratton (2003) does point out that as chefs progress in their career, they do experience new pressures which are outside of the kitchen.

5.5.2 Participant B

Participant B is female, age group 30 to 40, has been working as a chef for 15 years and currently is the chef manager for a cookery school. They have been in the position for 5 years. Participant B points out that at the beginning of the interview, that they normally handle stress well, and further advises that they have experienced occupational stress in their current position and previous positions. Karaeks' (1979) demand control model argues that there are two dimensions; psychological demands at work and how much control workers have to meet these demands. It could be argued that Participant B has a good level of control, as they advise that they usually handle stress well.

5.5.3 Participant C

Participant C is male, works as a head chef for an organisation which has a restaurant and catering business. Participant C is in age group 30 to 40 and has worked as a chef for 15 years. Experience includes working in Michelin star restaurants. The Participant discussed causes of occupational stress throughout his career, which is not limited to his current employment. Participant C chose his current employer, as there is a better work life balance, in that his hours are regular and due to nature of the business, there is limited requirement to work in the evening or at weekends. The Participant has worked in other organisations, which involved long working hours and the experience will be outlined in the research.

The author did receive verbal confirmation from a fourth participant, but the fourth designate participant did not respond to requests for interviews. Notwithstanding the volume of participants interviewed, the author believes that the data which has come from the research is rich and provides meaningful research for the causes and consequence of occupational stress for chefs working in Ireland

5.6 Research Limitations

The author did work diligently whilst preparing this paper and is aware of its limitations.

Firstly, the chefs who participated in the research are all at a similar stage in their advanced careers and are at managerial level. No young, junior chefs participated in the research and perhaps this is an area which is worthy of future research. Do chefs who fall in this category experience different causes of occupational stress?

Secondly, all of the participants work in Dublin. Future research could include several geographical locations in Ireland. Long working hours is a common theme in this piece of research and also in Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research. It could be possible that long working hours is only a seasonal issue in different parts of Ireland e.g. certain organisations are busier in the summer months.

Finally, some people may find it difficult to discuss occupational stress and how it impacts their lives outside of work. Perhaps this is what happened to the fourth participant.

The next chapter will deal with the research findings.

6 Research Findings

6.1 Introduction to RESEARCH FINDINGS

The author conducted three in-depth interviews with chefs who all have several years of experience and all work in managerial positions. The table detailed below provides a brief summary of the causes and consequences of occupational stress which are discussed in more depth in the findings for each participant. The lack of time to do things outside of work, has been a significant factor and is discussed in detail by two of the participants e.g. long working hours contributed to the breakup of a marriage for Participant C. All three participants are very experienced chefs, who work at managerial level and this is an added advantage for this piece of research due to their experience.

Participant A	
Causes of Occupational Stress	Consequences
Poor Collaboration	Discussing work at home/unable to switch off
Relationships with Manager	Not enough time outside of work
Training Issues	Reduced Desire for Social Activities
Physical Environment	

Participant B	
Causes of Occupational Stress	Consequences
Pregnancy	Discussing work at home/unable to switch off
Relationship with Manager	Feeling Negative Emotions
Role Overload	

Participant C	
Causes of Occupational Stress	Consequences
Role Overload	Unable to switch off outside of work
Management of Staff	Lack of time due to long working hours
Financial Pressures	
Dependency on Suppliers	

This paper will now discuss the findings in relation to the causes of occupational stress.

6.2 Causes of Occupational Stress – The Findings

6.2.1 Role Overload & Burnout

Martur and Vigg et al (2007) argue that work overload and time deadlines can lead to stress and role overload has been cited as a cause of occupational stress from two of the participants. Participant B said that at times, having too much to do at work is a cause of occupational stress. They described long days where there are many classes and in-between classes', the Participant is busy preparing for the next class. There is little time to take a step back and participate in important activities, such as strategic planning for the second half of the year in terms of planning new classes. Altum (2002) argue that burnout is not a symptom of occupational stress, instead it is the end result of occupational stress which is not managed. The author asks the question if the employer has responsibility to help manage occupational stress?

Rowley and Purcell (2001) research amongst hospitality workers in Northern Ireland, which revealed that chefs in the hospitality industry experienced the highest rate of burn out due to role overload. Similar findings were reported by Thomas (2001). This can be linked into this research as 66.6 % of the interviewees in this research have reported role overload as a cause of occupational stress. In addition to Participant B, Participant C explained that role overload is a cause of occupational stress and informed the author that there is so much to do and expected of him. He gets pulled in a lot of directions and as a head chef you have to

multi task all the time, as noted by the Participant. In addition to the kitchen duties, there is a lot of administrative work, training of staff, marketing and in addition to these duties; and he has to be the “*electrician and plumber*”. Once again, this can be linked back to Pratton (2003) who argues that chefs’ who progress in their career, will experience added pressure outside of the kitchen. Participant C advised that the work days are so busy; at times it appears that there is not enough time to get everything done. Again this can be linked back to Mathur and Vigg et al (2007), who state that role overload can lead to stress.

6.2.2 Relationship with Manager

Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research stated that poor management can lead to occupational stress. Participant A provided further context regarding the organisation that he currently works for. As group chef, he is often working late in the restaurant and seven days a week, due to problems with getting a quality head chef. The situation for the kitchen employees is very different to the employees of the retail outlet. For example, the retail outlet will closes at 10pm every day; therefore the staff who work in the outlet know when they are going home and they get their days off. The Participant is often working well beyond 10pm, and is on a salary; therefore there is no reward for working the extra hours.

The problem outlined by the Participant is that there is no communication from his manager who is his also the owner of the business. The Participant advised that he receive no thanks, empathy, feedback and any form of communication from their manager. The author enquired if there is any form of performance management in the organisation and the Participant advised that there was not.

The Participant highlighted that poor communications with his manager is a significant cause of occupation stress. Participant A believes that if his manager understood the

Participant's duties and challenges at work, acknowledged the long working hours and said thank you for a job well done, then this would improve the situation greatly and reduce the levels of occupational stress. He states "*There is no acknowledgment from the boss – there is no understanding*".

Participant B discussed the relationship with her manager, who is also the owner of the business. When the Participant commenced employment, they attempted to introduce new processes to make the operation more efficient. Their manager did not accept or give approval for the recommended processes. The Participant described that when she started working at the cookery school, she went that extra mile and described that this would be normal for any new employee. The Participant advised that there was no appreciation from her manager for her efforts and she was disappointed that her manager did not embrace the suggestions for new processes. The author enquired if the Participant's performance was ever reviewed regularly and further enquired if the Participant had regularly meetings with her manager. The Participant explained that performance was never reviewed and there were no regular meetings with her manager. She further added that her manager never says thank you or well done. Participant B commented that their employer had very little emotional intelligence. They further added that they thrive on feedback, and this is not forthcoming in their in their current employment. The Participant did however point out that performance was reviewed by the customers who complete feedback forms at the end of a class and generally the feedback was positive. The Participant further added that this was first time for the manager to be involved in the hospitality/education industry and they did not understand it, nor had a desire to understand it. The Participant stated that the poor relationship with their manager is a cause of occupational stress for her. Again, this

can be linked back into Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research which notes stress can be linked to poor management.

6.2.3 Physical Environment

Lieno-Nozal (2009) tells us that working conditions can have an adverse impact on the psychosocial aspects of work and can contribute to occupational stress. Participant A told the author about a time when he worked at a food fair in Europe. He knew there would be a stand which would be promoting product, where he would be part of the team. A few days before the event it was decided to cook meals and instead of a kitchen, there was a small kitchen corridor with which to produce the meals. Meals were produced for 5 days, approximately 180 meals per day and the experience of the kitchen corridor was a stressful situation for the Participant. The Participant described that the conditions were very cramped e.g. he could not move when the fridge door was open. The pace was very fast as so many meals were produced each day. *"Physically you were drained and mentally and mentally you were turned off"*, stated by Participant A. In addition to the cramped work space, there was poor ventilation, this meant having to work in uncomfortable high temperatures. The only thing which kept him going was the fact that he only had to do this for five days. Not only was the situation physically challenging, but it was mentally challenging and was a significant cause of occupational stress throughout his career as a chef.

6.2.4 Pregnancy

Participant B recently had a baby and worked up to 2 weeks before the birth. They described how they found the situation quite stressful. *"It was my first baby, as a chef you are very hands on and on your feet and I was carrying a large baby, it was stressful physically"*, stated by Participant B. Being on their feet, working long hours, and back to

back classes with no break were physically demanding. This was the first time that the Participant was pregnant, it was a new experience for her and she was found it overwhelming at times due to the work situation. This can also be linked into the physical working conditions.

6.2.5 Training Issues

Participant A talked about a time when he worked in a different organisation as head chef. The organisation had one hub kitchen for several outlets; restaurant, bar and clubhouse. He noted that having one hub kitchen for several outlets was demanding, as the product for each outlet was very different and the three outlets were equally busy. The hub kitchen was serving 3 types of customers, therefore 3 sets of waiting staff. The problem sited by the Participant, is that the waiting staff had absolutely no appreciation for the other outlets which were served by the hub. Demands would be made, without any appreciation and understanding for what was going on in the kitchen and the other outlets, they wanted their product now and would argue when there was a short wait, as the chefs were tending to product for the other outlets. Participant A notes the following "*There was a lack of understanding for the kitchen, even though it was discussed at meetings – the waiting staff were not trained to understand the kitchens workload – this culminates into a bad vibe and narky atmosphere*". Marthu et al (2007) points out that employees who are stressed, can at time be uncooperative, could it be that the waiting staff are stressed too?

The Participant put this demanding behaviour down to lack of training for the waiting staff. There was no understanding that the kitchen was a hub, providing a service to several outlets and that some training to explain the organisation and its goals would have helped this issue.

The Participant said that this situation further stressed that this situation was due to lack of training and caused him occupational stress.

6.2.6 Poor Collaboration

Participant A discussed that lack of team work with his current employment is a major cause of occupational stress. The Participant provided some context about the organisation where he is employed. There are approximately 280 employees and several departments within the organisation. The Participant noted that there was no common goal in the organisation and the departments are only concerned for themselves. The Participant further notes that the departments are indeed linked together and there should be a common goal and all employees should care about the brand. At present, the attitude amongst many of his peers about the business is nonchalant and the Participant puts this culture down to the business owner.

The Participant notes that when there are management meetings with the owner, not everything is discussed. Post meetings, people convene together ad-hoc and discuss items which have should have been discussed together at the meeting. *"People would get together after the meeting and ask what do you think of this and what do you think of that".*

The Participant notes that meetings need to be more effective; people should work better together as a team and discuss things openly.

In terms of not working well together as a team, a sales colleague approached the Participant recently and provided feedback regarding the apple tart which is produced by the organisation and sold in the retail outlets. The manner in which the feedback was given was not positive and delivered in a negative tone. The sales colleague noted that two competitors have better apple tarts and that organisation's apple tart was bad. The

Participant notes that surely his colleague could have approached the situation in a more positive manner, perhaps noting that there was a good opportunity to improve the product and deliver the message in a more positive tone.

The author noted that the Participant's voice tone did become frustrated as they discussed the problem regarding poor collaboration with their current employer.

The Participant advised that the poor level of collaboration within his current employment is the most significant cause of occupational stress for him today. This leads us now onto the relationship with the manager.

6.2.7 Management of Staff

Udovicic (2004) argues that responsibility for others is a burden that all managers have to bear. There are a couple of items regarding management of staff which is a source of occupational stress for Participant C. Firstly when the Participant is not in the kitchen, he is thinking are the staff doing what they are supposed to be doing, particularly from a health and safety standpoint. The Participant explained being compliant at all times regarding food hygiene is very important and when not in the kitchen the Participant is always thinking "*are the staff working clean*". The author would like to point out that the Participant did explain that his team are trained and complaint regarding health and safety standards.

Another aspect regarding the management of staff is training chefs and making them the best chefs that they can be. This demonstrates that the Participant obviously cares for his subordinates and is concerned that they are adequately trained and learn new techniques. This can also be linked into to wanting to show good career progression for the junior chefs in the organisation. Pressures due to managing a team can also be linked back to Pratton

(2003) who notes that as chefs climb the career ladder, they experience new different pressures.

6.2.8 Financial Pressures – under resourced

Participant C is the head chef and is aware of the company's financials and the importance of making a profit. Due to the requirement for the business to make a profit, often costs are reduced and sometimes this is achieved by being under resourced and this has a significant impact on the kitchens workload, it is greatly increased. At times, it can be difficult to ask people to do more, when they are already stretched, as outlined by the Participant. As head chef, focus on profit is at times a cause of occupational stress and the matter is compounded by not being fully resourced.

6.2.9 Dependency on Suppliers

Participant C explained that there is a significant dependency on suppliers. Will they deliver the product on time and at the required quality? This situation can be a regular cause of occupational stress for Participant C.

6.3 Consequences of Occupational Stress

6.3.1 Unable To Switch off After Work

Participant C explained that sometimes it is difficult to switch off after work. At times, the Participant is constantly thinking about work and is not focused on non-work items and cites not being focused on family as an example. Participant C advises that at times he can be thinking about problems, solutions, finances in relation to work and commented that if you don't think about work items, mistakes can happen.

Participant B described that at times when they experience occupational stress they are "whinge" when at home and often discuss the problems at work with their partner. The

discussion with the partner includes the lack of appreciation from the manager, the pressure of being on one's feet all day – whilst expecting a baby and the demanding work schedule. Just like Participant A, they find it difficult to detach themselves from work once they are not working.

Participant A discussed the fact that when he gets home, he discusses work with his partner and at time it can be difficult to switch off. He describes a feeling of “*rattiness*” and often can “*vent*” his frustration with his partner. Whilst his partner is happy to listen about work, the Participant would prefer to return to home after work, in a good mood and not being so focused on work.

6.3.2 Insufficient Time Outside of Work

Pratten (2003) tells us that hours in the chef professions, as well as being long are anti-social. Participant A notes that there is often not enough time for outside of work, due to long working hours. He advises the author that he lives right beside a beach and has not been on the beach for 3 weeks. The Participant also explains that he does not get the opportunity to participate in exercise and tend to items which he has been planning for a long time e.g. go and see a show.

Participant C advised that due to long working hours at times, this means that there is not enough time to get things done outside of work and to have adequate time with a partner, family and friends. “*When you are a chef, you are not always at home, your home life does struggle*” stated by Participant C.

Participant C described that it can be problematic to do things like go to the bank and being home to wait for a provider to visit to install an internet/phone connection can be a struggle.

Another consequence due to lack of time outside of work is the impact on relationships and not being able to spend adequate time with a significant other. Participant C told the author that his first marriage broke up and part of the break up was due to long working hours, "*I've been married once before and it kind of did cause me to lose that relationship*". This experience can be linked into Pratten (2003) who points out that long work hours can have an adverse impact on relationships.

The long hours also impact on not being able to enjoy exercise. Participant C enjoys playing golf and fishing and at times in his career has been unable to enjoy these activities, due to the working hours.

Social life can suffer due to long working hours. Participant C explains that when working long hours, it can be difficult to make new friends and have time for friends and family. Often, colleagues become your friends and due to working shifts, it is often even not possible to spend time with work friends outside of work. The Participant noted that it is difficult to establish relationships and tend to the ones that you do have.

6.3.3 Negative Emotions

Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) report that amongst other consequences, chefs experienced emotional exhaustion. Participant C explained that at times, she would feel negative emotions outside of work, due to occupational stress. When further asked about these emotions, the Participant explained that it was a variety of negative feelings which she has encountered. The negative emotions felt are feeling agitated, crying, feeling on edge and emotional exhaustion. The author noted that the Participant often looked away when discussing this topic, very limited eye contact. This may mean that the Participant felt

uncomfortable during this part of the discussion. Shirom (2009) argues that one of the consequences of burnout is emotional exhaustion.

6.3.4 Reduced Desire for Social Activities

When Participant A does get time outside of work, much of their time is spent attending to everyday chores e.g. cleaning and shopping. Participant A outlined that there is very little time to “*chill*” and often he would like to “*chill*”. He cited that just listening to the radio for the day would be an ideal day for relaxing and this type of activity is often not possible. Participant A informed the author about a social event he attended with his partner. Whilst his partner enjoyed the event and social aspect, he wished he was at home with no social contact and just wanted the opportunity to relax. Participant A informed the author that his desire for social activities and interaction has greatly reduced, due to the long working hours. This again can be linked back into Pratten (2003) who points out that chefs work long hours and the profession is anti-social. Whilst long working hours was not highlighted as an occupational stressor by Participant A, the author believes that it is causing stress, the consequences being reduced desire for social activities and not enough time at home.

6.3.5 Further Comments from Participant in Relation to the Hospitality Industry

Participant B wished to share some comments and observations regarding the hospitality industry. She advised that chefs are continuously under pressure with many deadlines to meet. For many chefs they work with a small group of people all of the time and have very little contact with other people. Participant B further commented that the industry is male orientated and there is little opportunity to develop social skills – “*It is very male all orientated, they talk about the same thing all the time, they are in the kitchen all the time, not dealing with other people, not developing social skills – they are demanding of each other*”. She noted that some kitchens have a hostile environment, where chefs treat each

other as pigs, they are demanding of one another and bullying is accepted. This can be linked back to Notelaers et al (2012) who states that bullying at work has significantly increased. The Participant also notes that there can be violence and this can be linked into John and Menzel who argue that physical abuse experienced by chefs is very common. She further noted that due to long working hours, many chefs don't know how to drive.

Finally Participant B recommends that chefs should spend time in the dining room with the guests after service, as is common in some upmarket restaurants. She advised that the interaction with the customers will develop a chef's confidence and improve their social skills. The Participant further added that it will give them a sense of ownership and pride.

7 Recommendations

The participants have provided several causes of occupational stress. In this chapter, the author makes some recommendations, which should help reduce the levels of occupation stress experience not only by the participants and other chefs, but the author believes the recommendations should help occupational stress levels for other professions too. A summary of the recommendations are:

Recommendations	
Improve Manager & Subordinate Relationship Training Well Being Classes	Improvement for Work/Life Balance Reasonable Accommodations for Pregnant Employees

7.1 Improve Manager and Subordinate Relationship

It is clear from Participant's A & B, that the relationship with the manager is a cause of occupational stress for both participants. This can be improved easily, by setting aside regular time for one to one meetings, to discuss what issues, what is happening well, areas that needs more focus, bookings, planning, menus etc. Notwithstanding the absence of a performance management system and training (which will be dealt with in the next recommendation), regular discussions which help improve the manager and subordinate relationship.

7.2 Training

Firstly, hospitality organisations can introduce a performance management system, the aims being to develop individuals, and improve the performance of the organisation and individuals. The philosophy of performance management is practised in many companies. In recent years and the areas of the concept focus on goal setting, continuous two way

feedback and constant development. The author is surprised that Participant A's company, where there are almost 300 employees do not have a formal performance management system.

The next recommendation for training is for all managers in the hospitality industry should participate in people management training. Participants A & B both highlighted that the poor relationship with their manager is a cause of occupational stress. They receive very little feedback, they state that their managers do not understand their roles and their managers do not thank them when they succeed or go the extra mile. People training management will emphasise the importance of keeping employees motivated and understanding their employee's roles, as well as other aspects of people management including managing underperformance.

The third recommendation regarding training is for all of the team at the very least be involved in team discussions regarding what is going on in the business, what the goals are, and the importance of strong team work and collaboration.

7.3 Improve Work-Life Balance

Employers need to understand the importance of work life balance. Long working hours were reported by all three participants and two of them discussed in detail how this impact on their personal life. Notwithstanding the requirement to fulfil business needs, employers need to ensure that they are aware of the consequences of staff working hours, this can include high attrition, low morale, burn out and impact performance. Employers need to monitor hours and take action where employees are consistently working long hours. It is expected that Employers are aware of the maximum hours that one can work under the

organisation of working time act 1997 – that is they should not exceed 48 hours averaged in a month period.

7.4 Make Reasonable Accommodations for Pregnant Employees

Participant B reported that they experienced occupational stress due to pregnancy and working long hours, often standing up for most of the day. Where possible employers should look at making reasonable accommodations for employees who find it stressful when pregnant. For the weeks preceding the maternity leave, employers can ensure that pregnant employees don't work extra hours and offer some hours which involve not standing up; perhaps do some administrative duties.

7.5 Introduction of Well-being Classes

All participants' in the research stated that they found it difficult to detach themselves from work, when they are not working. For very little cost, it is recommended that employers introduce wellbeing classes, which could be delivered twice a year. As well as focus on techniques for relaxation, other relevant topics include the importance of exercise and good diet. Classes are generally no longer than 2 hours; cost for this type of programme is approximately €300-500. In terms of time and financial cost, it is a minimum for the employer and will yield good results for the employer and the employees.

8 Conclusion

We know there is a shortage of chefs in Ireland (Irish Examiner 2012) and occupational stress regarding chefs was deemed to be a worthy piece of research in Northern Ireland a few years ago (Gibbons and Gibbons 2007). The author has made the argument that it is incumbent for researchers to conduct further research in 2013 in a different jurisdiction to determine what are the causes and consequences of occupational stress.

The research in this paper has some common themes regarding the causes of occupational stress to what was reported in Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research. These themes include role overload, relationship with manager and violence/bullying is discussed in both pieces of research, albeit discussed as an observation and not a cause of stress by Participant B. A new theme is occupational stress due to pregnancy. Participant B advised that they spend long working days on their feet and at times, have found it very stressful. Perhaps this particular cause of occupational stress is worthy of research in the future and it raises the question regarding health & safety; is working and standing on one's feet all day a potential risk for mother and baby? This can be linked into other professions who are often on their feet whilst at work e.g. doctors, shop assistants, lecturers and airline crew. The Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) research did note one of the common consequences of occupational stress was increased consumption of alcohol. This was not part of the authors' research findings and raises the question has attitude amongst the profession matured with regard to sensible drinking?

The relationship with manager was cited as cause of occupational stress by two of the participants. Heathfield (2013) points out that people leave their managers not their jobs. The author is a Human Resources Manager and is well aware that many employees leave

their manager, as opposed to leave their job. The issue with poor employee/manager relationship is universal and not exclusive to the profession of chefs. This leads the author to briefly outline some of the recommendations.

The author was somewhat surprised about hearing about the poor relationships with manager as reported by two of the participants. A simple effective solution is to diary regular meetings and make sure that they happen. Dialogue needs to be open and two way. This type of interaction will surely assist in improving the relationship and thus helping to reducing occupational stress. It also helps managers and subordinates to understand each other's expectations and problems. Notwithstanding business needs, the author has further recommended that employers look at making reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees, who are on their feet all day and would benefit from less time on their feet. Perhaps if employers who are not active in performance discussions and the philosophy of wellbeing – were to adopt some practices to address these issues, as well as potentially reducing occupational stress, it may make the profession more attractive to new entrants. Training can easily address these issues, which can include people management training and the fundamentals of performance management.

Future research could widen the geographical area and range of chefs e.g. to include junior chefs. Junior chefs will most likely not experience occupational stress due to the responsibility of managing other staff, however, there could be a new significant cause of occupational stress and if so, it should be addressed. Another piece of research could look at the employers and ask are they aware of causes of occupational stress for their staff and do they take measures to help reduce the levels of occupational stress?

The paper dealt with several pieces of definitions of researched, all coming from academia sources. It is a popular topic, as the date range for the literature is from 1949 to 2007. Will the word of academia bring a new definition to the meaning of stress within the next 10 years, which will help us to understand it better and have better coping mechanisms for it?

Martin (2002) points out that there has been huge growth in the belief that laughter and humour has health benefits, which includes helping to reduce stress levels. Maybe we all need to have a bit more of a laugh in life?

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