Women's Career Paths Leading to Low-Skilled Jobs: Preference, Choice, and Motherhood.

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MSc in Human Resources Management

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Master's Thesis

December 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the past decades, capitalism has developed to its "purest" form, with people's identities and perspectives being more individualised and marketized than ever before (Grompton, 2002). The growth of economic liberalism led to the deregulation of the labour market and to the establishment of a new type of employment, which is flexible and short-term. Hence, it is interconnected with the trends of individualism in employment, where individuals marketize themselves and their growth is associated with individualized pay programs, self-directed training, and career paths, as well as "high commitment" management practices (Grompton, 2002). In correlation with the increasing numbers of women getting educated and entering the workforce, especially after the 70s, it is argued that women entering the workforce in America was a catalyst for the growth of American economy, although it is highlighted that women have not yet tapped their full potential and it is crucial to deploy women using their full capabilities (Barsh & Yee, 2011). Therefore, changes in society and consequently norms, believes, ideas and family structures were inevitable.

Specifically, as Seccombe (1993) argues, capitalism damages the family structure, as it is unconcerned about the private lives of the labour force it acquires. These changes unavoidable relate to the creation of new gender norms and the employment of women (Grompton, 2002). Working women were accused of the distraction of the traditional family structure and many people support the idea of returning to the traditional breadwinning model, where men would be the main financial provider and women would be responsible only for their roles as mothers and wives (Fukuyama, 1999). Opposing this argument, Grouch (1999) supports that these changes in family from the employment of women are not so drastic. As it has been shown from research, these changes just have modified at some level the family model as well as the gender norms, as women tend to work in low paid and marginal positions and at the same time, they still have a big part of the responsibility of taking care of the household,

thus the variations of the social compromise are reproduced in a different institutional setting (Grouch, 1999). Therefore, even though gender norms have shifted, these arguments indicate that there is still a division between the sexes, as it has always been (Grompton, 2002).

Moreover, it is crucial to define what a "career path" is and what is meant when referring to "low skilled positions". A short definition given by the Cambridge Dictionary for career path is "the way that you progress in your work, either in one job or in a series of jobs" while low skilled is defined as the position that one does "not have or need a high level of skill or education". Low-skilled professions, by definition, do not necessitate specialized professional qualifications. Specifically, low-skilled occupations are defined as those that require people to have no more than a high school diploma and no more than one year of work experience. We contend that such positions are low-skilled due to their low entry requirements (Maxwell, 2006). It is important that these terms are understandable, as they are being used very often in the following chapters.

Relatedly, there are different theories and perspectives on women's career paths. The factors that influence women's career paths have been extensively researched through the years, resulting in a substantial body of literature. There are a lot of different components and factors that can influence career choices in general, hence the large variety of different studies, which observe different aspects, components, and factors in different contexts, its justifiable. Many experts have developed different theories and supported a variety of arguments supporting their perspectives. The purpose of this research is to identify the factors affecting women's career paths leading to low skilled positions in Cyprus, while focusing on the context of preference, choice and motherhood and how these affect women's career paths. Specifically, the research question was "what factors influence women's career paths leading to low skilled positions?" taking into consideration preference, choice and motherhood

       The following chapter examines the international literature on the subject first, and then in the context of Cyprus. The following section discusses the methodological approach used for this research, including the data collection method, sample description, and interview process. Following that comes an analysis and discussion of the findings. The final two chapters contain the limitations of the research and suggestions, followed by the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review
The numbers talk

Understanding numbers is equally important as they provide one with a general idea of what is happening in the world. In 2021 women account for 47.7% of the global workforce, while only 27.1% of women are in decision making positions as managers and/or leaders. Furthermore, 48% of women held entry-level positions and 42% of women claim they have been discriminated at work because of their gender (27 Enlightening Women in the Workforce Statistics for 2021, 2021). Furthermore, a report by the International Labour Office (2019) stated that that in 51 countries, a solid 46 percent of women worked while having young children. A staggering 65 percent of women believe that not many women are in leadership roles due to a lack of confidence, while more than half believe this is due to having children, and 61 percent believe that motherhood disrupts their advancement opportunities. Also 69% of women say that they feel some kind of pressure by society to put family before their career. Moreover, women are typically paid less than men for the same job. Globally, the gender pay gap is widening, with women earning 16% less than men in hourly salaries and 22% less in monthly earnings (mentioned at Silver Swan Recruitment, 2021). Additionally, *"In the EU as a whole, a third of female employees work part-time, a proportion around five times greater than for men. Women also constitute a (small) majority of fixed-term, temporary or casual workers, being almost a third more likely than men to be so employed*." (Hardy & Adnett, 2002, p. 160). These statistics provide the general idea of what is the place of women in the workforce and how women perceive their career opportunities. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to investigate why women are more likely to end up in low-skilled occupations, as well as the variables that influence their career pathways that lead to these roles – taking into account the ramifications and what this means for these women. Exploring professional trajectories and the

factors influencing them is critical if we want to understand what is going on and take appropriate steps to help women 'escape' this path.

There has been given a lot of explanations regarding career decisions between having a family or career or combining both. One of the most popular theories on the topic is the Preference Theory (Hakim, 1998), while it sparked a new wave of literature arguing against it. Further below Preference Theory and the critique around it is discussed.

Preference Theory

Preference Theory relates to the research questions of this research as it used to explain the work-life preferences of women in the 20th century. Hence, it could explain why women follow certain career paths. To begin with, Preference Theory has been developed by the British sociologist Catherine Hakim in the early 2000s. It aims to map the factors that contribute to the low levels of fertility in modern developed countries. Through her research, she developed a threefold typology in order to provide a theoretical framework of the classification of women's work-life preferences in the twenty-first century (Hakim, 1998). The main argument is that, when women are given a genuine choice, they choose between one of three lifestyles: home-centred, adaptive, and work-centred.

Firstly home-centred women are the ones who place a high value on their family and children. It must be noted that this group is a minority and as Hakim (2002, p. 437) mentions it is a "relatively invisible one given the current media focus on working women and high achievers". home-centred women do not desire to work after marriage with some exceptions in cases of financial difficulties, and they obtain qualifications solely to supplement their intellectual dowry with tendencies on taking courses in social sciences, arts and humanities. Also, family affluence, government social policy, and other factors influence their decision on the number of children they will have. This type of women is unresponsive to employment

policies. At this point Hakim suggests that women if they have to work, they prefer low-skilled positions or part- time positions, as they do not really want to work.

The second group is adaptive women, which comprises of women who wish to integrate work and family. Moreover, they want to work but are not fully committed to work and they obtain qualifications with the goal to work. This group is very responsive to government social policies, opportunity policies, economic cycles, and growth among other things. For instance, childcare services, legislation promoting female employment, work flexibility, the attitudes of trade unions towards working women, institutional factors etc.

Women who are work-centred make up the final category, a minority group as well. Here are concentrated women who are childless. Even when they are married, they prefer to not have children. Employment or similar competitive activities such as politics, art and so on, are top priorities in their life and they are committed to them. Also, they are more likely to devote a significant amount of money in obtaining qualifications for employment or other activities. Lastly, work-centred women are unresponsive to social and family policies, while they are responsive to economic, political and other opportunities (Hakim, 1998).

Hakim's research indicates that once women have genuine choices open, they choose one of the three different lifestyles as aforementioned. These preferences can be found across all levels of education and social classes. Motivation, personal life goals, attitudes and values take precedence over socioeconomic class (Hakim, 2006). The minority of women are work-centre in contrast with the majority of men (Hakim, 1998), hence preference theory predicts that men will keep dominating the labour market and other competitive activities, as just a minority of women are willing to prioritise their careers and other activities in the public sphere in the same way men do. In the long-term, work-centred people (including men and women)

will most probably survive and become top performers in greedy occupations (Hakim, 2006), which are the work intensive ones, where long hours are required, such as law and finance.

Moreover, Hakim's Preference Theory has been developed around the concept of women having real choices in the 21st century after the occurrence of five fundamental changes in society and labour market. These changes are firstly, the second feminist wave in 1965, which gave to sexually active women the ability to decide for their own body and fertility. Secondly, the equal opportunities revolution, where historically women for the first time had access to every position, profession and career in the market. Thirdly, the expansion of white-collar positions, which are more appealing to women than blue-collar positions. Fourthly, the creation of works for persons who do not want to prioritize paid work over other aspects of their lives. Lastly the rising importance of attitudes, beliefs, and personal preferences in lifestyle choices within rich modern societies (Hakim, 2002). Hakim (2002) supports that not every developed country has achieved this new scenario. For instance, Sweden lacks genuine choices, as two of the five changes are not developed at the same rate as in other modern societies: the creation of secondary earners and the importance of values and attitudes. Hence, she argued that preferences "have a strong impact on behaviour: on employment rates, hours worked, fertility, and patterns of marriage and divorce" only in countries where this new scenario exists (Hakim, 2003 p.342).

Hakim's "Preference Theory" has been supported in some literature; however, it has been the subject of great criticism, especially from feminist scholars. In the following sections, some of the criticisms of Preference Theory are presented, beginning with some general criticism and then focusing on factors affecting women's career paths, followed by a brief discussion of Regulations and Institutions, and finally the context of Cyprus will be discussed.

The General Criticism of Preference Theory

some researchers criticize preference theory, as it seems context was not taken into consideration. The research of Hakim was mainly focused on the United States and Britain, thus research conducted later on showed that Hakim's typology does not apply in many countries, such as Czech Republic (Rabusic & Chromkova Manea, 2007). another follow-up study conducted in Europe found data to support Preference Theory only in two countries out of eleven: Britain and Denmark. These eleven countries have a variation of political, economic and social systems: Liberal, Social Democratic, Conservative and Southern European (Vitall, Billari, Prskawetz, & Testa, 2009). The evidence from this follow-up study support Hakim's hypothesis that public policies could possibly affect the distribution of preference towards specific groups in some countries.

As presented below, more studies have been opposing to Preference Theory finding common ground in some respects but also disagreeing with some fundamental aspects such as what is choice and what constrains might exist which affect one's choices. The main criticisms focus on the causation link, and whether varied desires cause heterogeneous behaviour (Vitall, Billari, Prskawetz, & Testa, 2009). Conversely, Hakim's critics argue that the causality link is in the opposite direction, that is, that person-specific conditions and background variables make the vast majority of a person's life orientation and thus determine decisions, whereas preferences do not causally explain behaviour, but rather shape and influence choices (as cited in Vitall, Billari, Prskawetz, & Testa, 2009).

Factors Affecting Women's Career Paths

Women's careers are affected by various reasons as it can be shown from the literature, however the next discussion focuses on the constrains and choices of women, working time and workplace policies.

Constrains and Choices

"Human existence is defined by the choices people make. Every second of everyday we are choosing, and there are always alternatives" (Schwartz, 2014 p.2). Schwartz (2014) in his book The Paradox of Choice Why More is Less, is referring to the materialistic plethora of choices people can make in modern societies. As he supports, the ability to choose improves the quality of one's life, as it enables one to control their destiny and come near to getting what they want out of any given situation. However, choices can be affected by the circumstances as well as other components. There is a large amount of literature examining people's "choices" regarding different aspects of their lives and the complexity behind these choices, hence, there are many studies about women's choices in employment, education and motherhood.

McRae (2003) argues that Hakim's observation about abortion – women choose to either have an abortion or not- leaves out the options available to each particular woman who becomes pregnant, or how those options may be formed by her personal, economic, or social circumstances. Also, how a woman could prefer one thing yet settle for something else for various logical reasons. For instance, personal circumstances such as being impregnated by somebody else rather than a husband/partner or at the start of an overly demanding career, are most likely to lead a woman to "choose" to have an abortion (McRae, 2003). Even though when one is going against a deeply held preference to keep the baby or the ethical disapproval of the abortion. To support that, further research observing the relation among teenage birth, abortion and education among women of the ages 20 up to 24 has shown that the social and economic conditions affecting abortion are too complicated to be understood just as the expression of women's choice (Wellings & Kane, 1999). McRae (2003) stresses that there is no denial that women make the choice of abortion based on their best judgement, but her argument is solidly to point out that Hakims (2003) statement that "…at the personal level, there is no continuum: women choose to have an abortion or not" is "sociologically naïve, if not holly empty" (McRae, 2003 p.587). In the same note, Tomlinson (2006 p.368) argues that

women act within their "structural settings", their choices are based on their "local context" and what they perceive as possible courses of action. Hence, people's actions are based on the information they have at the given moment and they "act on what they think their options and choices are."

Moreover, the expression "glass ceiling" is a metaphor for how all institutions' policies and practices have embedded barriers to women's professional advancement (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Interestingly enough, the fact that a small percentage of women is in senior positions, it has been taken by some as an indication that the "glass ceiling" and structural barriers are unjustifiable, and it is in women's hand to try harder to get these positions. At the same time the failure of women to get in managerial positions it is the consequence of their own choices. Theories about the Human Capital explain that women choose not to get senior positions, as they prefer to create family and have children (Hakim, 2000). Nevertheless, Tomlinson (2006 p.368) mentions that "*Women differ in their capacity to make genuine or unconstrained choices in the labour market compared with men, but also, women differ in their financial capacities to facilitate their own work-life balance preferences, for example, whether they can afford to pay for private childcare*." To support that, research conducted in Australia about women in senior positions in academics has shown that factors such as career interruptions (e.g., care responsibilities) or the "*structural location of women in higher education employment means that, generally, women's academic career progression is slowed down in ways that men are not*" (Pyke, 2013 p.446). More specifically, there is a number of institutional impediments which contributed on the delay of women's advancement in academic professions, for instance, the fact that they lack time to spare as aforementioned mostly for caring responsibilities, women are forced to concentrate on lower academic ranks such as teaching or administration, this has as a result to minimize their time even more. Time they could invest in activities to build their career like research (Pyke, 2013). The same study

concluded that there are "*varied freedoms, opportunities and circumstances impacting on women's career aspirations…both individual and structural circumstances shape the possibility of whether or not seeking promotion is feasible or desirable…*" (Pyke, 2013 p.452).

Another cross-culture research conducted in Britain, Norway and France by Grompton (2002 p.549) showed that when male managers had to take care of domesticated responsibilities their career was affected, she notes that "*it is important to remember that caring is gender coded rather than 'gendered' in any essentialist sense, and that men who have to (or choose to) assume a major caring role will also face problems in developing managerial careers*". Yet a small number of men in managerial positions would choose to share the caring duties (Grompton, 2002). Also, mothers who work full-time are more likely to spend twice as much time as fathers on domestic work as well as childcare, thus women are facing more obstacles in succeeding in the labour market (Hardy & Adnett, 2002).

Equally important is research focused on women who desire to re-enter the labour market after a few years of unpaid care-taking responsibilities analysed their orientation towards work, for instance various factors influencing women's (re)entry into the labour market. It had shown a strong correlation between women's work inclinations and personal, financial and family restrictions (Doorewaard, Hendrickx, & Verschuren, 2004). McRae's (2003) research indicates that the choices regarding family and work for some women are not a complete reflection of their preference, as "life intervenes in unexpected ways and that marriages flounder as a result". Correspondingly, Tomlinson (2006) adds that work-life balance preferences of women are much more likely to face constrains at certain points in life, especially when they are responsible for young children and demanding family responsibilities, though it is acknowledged that this limitation influenced by women's social standing. A woman's employment path can change during her life for different reasons such as family

changes, crisis, shock or death, self-development occupational restructuring and many more (Crompton & Harris, 1998).

Working Time and Workplace Policies

In the book The Time Divide: Work, Family and Gender Inequality Jacobs and Gerson argue that in America time pressure has become a form of inequality creating a division between the overworked and the unemployed, women and men, parents and non-parents, hence there is extreme pressure on single parents and dual earners, as demanding jobs are keep increasing. Making a comparison between American employees and European employees, they found that in any of the countries they looked at policies that are both family-friendly and gender equal are not fully implemented. As a result, they suggest that the United States needs to develop a new variety of conditions that allow American employees to combine work and family life in new ways (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Therefore, they argue that all jobs and careers can be "domesticated" in the sense they may be altered to be more family friendly.

However, Hakim (2006) disagrees with that argument as many job positions require frequent travelling such as managerial positions, positions in the travel industry, news reporting etc. In many cases employees must travel for long time periods in unpredictable timetable and often with short notice. Hence, she supports those careers based on these positions can never be "family-friendly", as well as other occupations that require irregular and long work hours such as public relations work. In addition, Hakim (2006) argues that these types of careers demonstrate the limitations of changing the fundamental character of occupations with parental schemes and maternity leave. As employees (mostly women) in these industries, after having children they will wish to find an alternative sort of labour, therefore maintaining their positions open for them would be pointless. Also, the competitive nature of the market suggests that the employee who can commit to the job full-time and permanently is significantly more likely to be a high achiever (Hakim, 2006).

McRae (2003) agrees with Hakim that throughout the years when they are responsible for dependent children, the vast majority of women do not pursue full-time and continuous employment. She also agrees that his pattern of employment is linked to polarization in women's labour market outcomes as well as gender disparities in income, professions, pensions, and other areas. However, the part McRae (2003) disputes it is whether Preference Theory "fits the reality" of most women's lives, to be specific whether women's preference give an adequate and necessary explanation for their work choices. Hence, Preference Theory fails to account for the fact that situational, structural, and normative restrictions may influence women's choices, as well as the fact that lifestyle preferences fluctuate over time (McRae, 2003). Moreover, in the general literature is being supported that fertility might cause changes in values and preferences. Specifically, home-centred women might not tend to become more frequently married with children, but it is possible that becoming mothers with children causes preferences to be directed toward a family-centred lifestyle (Vitall, Billari, Prskawetz, & Testa, 2009).

Another study comparing the average number of hours of paid labour done by couples, as well as the fraction of couples working very long weekly hours and gender variations in working time within families between Canada, the United States and eight European countries taking information from the Luxembourg Income Study (De Tombeur, 1995). It showed that the proportional balance of time spent on work, family and leisure is influenced by gender, socioeconomic status, and nation (Gornick, 2004). Employees with higher education level tend to work more hours in comparison of employees with less education, as it seems that "being busy" appears to have supplanted leisure as a social status indicator.

Moreover, Gornick (2004) emphasizes that the concept of average experience might be deceiving, particularly when actual reports lean toward a bimodal distribution. For instance, Gershuny (2000) reports that the average person spends approximately around 5 hours in paid

work on an average day. However, there is not such a thing as an average day, as some days are workdays while others are vacation days or weekends as well as most employees work around to eight to ten hours. Also, when presenting averages, it can result into making it impossible to focus on the sub-groups at the centre of arguments over working hours, such as single mothers, young adult grappling with parenthood and work options. Research demonstrates that *"mothers working part-time are clustered into a few occupational areas consisting of 'elementary administration and service occupations', 'sales and customer service occupations', 'caring personal service occupations', and 'administrative occupations'"* where often women are overqualified for these positions (Tomlinson, 2006 p.366). According to Tomlinson's (2006) findings there are three major elements which either can help or impede the fulfilment of every woman's employment preference, moving their pathways towards and away from part-time work following maternity leave: care networks, job status and the welfare policy framework.

In Grompton's (2002) research about the consequences for families of lower-level flexible employment, she takes the example of a low-skilled sector employment. The Shopwell is a well-known supermarket with its policies being family oriented. There is no emphasis on hierarchy and every employee is known and addressed with their first name. Also, some of the family friendly policies are enhanced maternity and paternity leave, as well as grandparental leave and a reasonable flexibility in working hours. The majority of employees work part-time and they makeshift swaps. These flexibilities on the working arrangements are possible because of the nature of the work, as it is low-skilled (and it pays accordingly) but also, because of the efforts management made to help their employees, who are most likely in multi-earner families. This example could be a good one as to why women will "choose" to stay on these types of jobs, which offer flexibility and are family- friendly. However, the flexibility around working hours often are distributed not to fit the preferences of employees but to meet the needs of the

employer. Also, in these sectors which traditionally employee women, it has been observed an increase on working in the evenings and weekends, as well as unpaid obligatory overtime (Hardy & Adnett, 2002).

Regulations and Institutions

The law and legislation regarding women's rights in the workplace can differentiate from one country to another for instance, countries who are part of the European Union have to follow the guidelines of EU. In 1990 the European Women's Lobby was created, in order to represent all national-level women's groups. "It engages both in "traditional" mobilization strategies and consultation processes of (gender) policy" (Seibicke, 2020 p.386). In 1996, parental rights including parental paid or unpaid leave, maternity absence and employment protection were European Union's requirements for its country members from the EU Pregnant Workers Division (92/85/EC, OJ L-384/1). Thus, this division is referring only to female employees who are "pregnant, have recently given birth, or are breast feeding" (Callender, Millward, Lissenburgh, & Forth, 1997). There are more Directives from the EU such as the Parental Leave Directive (94/34/EC, OJ L-145/4) and the Equal Treatment in Employment Directive (COM (2000) 334 final), in order to promote work-life balance (Hardy & Adnett, 2002).

In 2002, the European Commission with the Report on Equal Opportunities recognized that in order to minimize the gender gap, they should emphasise on raising the percentage of female employees by promoting family-friendly work environments (Hardy & Adnett, 2002). In order to create this family-friendly environment, they created policies that can be categorized in four groups. The first group is "leaving work for family reasons", including parental, maternity and paternity leave and leave to take care an elderly dependant. The second group is "changing the work arrangement for family reasons". This group incorporates job sharing, working from

home, compressed working week, flexitime, ability to switch from full time to part time and vice versa and term-time-only contracts. The third group is the "practical help with child and elder-person care" with play programs for holidays and affordable and accessible nurseries. The last group is "information, training and networking assistance". This category refers to the assistance of re-entrants and the "active promotion of family friendly benefits and entitlements" (Hardy & Adnett, 2002; Evans, 2001). The most emphasis on the legal aspect of EU is in the first catecory, however there was a larg amount of emphasis given in the third group from the Employment Strategy (Hardy & Adnett, 2002).

Research conducted in Britain about maternity rights in 2008 indicates that maternity rights legislation in the United Kingdom is allowing mothers to stay with their babies for longer periods of time and giving them the option to take an allowance from the government, for a part of that period (Burgess, Gregg, Propper, & Washbrook, 2008). Also, it shows that women who gave birth and they have rights are more likely to return to their employment. On the other hand, in the cases of absence of rights there will be a "distribution of optimally chosen return times to work". This distribution will be determined by the earnings that women can obtain in the labour market, non-labour income sources, childcare expenditures, and "personal preferences". Nonetheless, it will be determined by the skill distributions of women, salary disparities between men and women, childcare services and family structure. The income and substitution effect will change this distribution through the maternity rights legislation, however how each woman would react to them differs based on the type of employee they are. The income effect affects low waged women while the "substitutional effect dominates high waged women" (Burgess, Gregg, Propper, & Washbrook, 2008). The same study has indicated that "less skilled women and those with non-working partners" return back to work after the paid maternity leave stops, at the same time women in senior or high skilled positions with

working partners "return at seven months when unpaid leave ends" (Burgess, Gregg, Propper, & Washbrook, 2008 p.25).

Another research aiming to observe if the European's Women's Lobby can control the tension between being the critical voice advocating for women's interests and "providing efficient technical expertise" has shown that "Proponents of a "gender expertise" provision in EU policy processes would interpret the increase of normative-based claims as the EWL's ability to infuse the policy process with feminist and moral expertise, thereby advancing feminist goals and highlighting inequalities." (Seibicke, 2020 p.387). Hence, this can be seen as a "strategic tool" which can bring change within the European Union. However, EWL knowledge on moral and technical expertise must keep increasing in order to keep adapting "to the reality of the increased expertization of EU policymaking…" (Seibicke, 2020 p.387). Legislation is crucial for women's career choices in general as it can change the legal foundation for women, but it is especially significant for women in low skilled occupations since unfairness and inequality may be a factor that leads women to those positions. Legislation is also vital in achieving gender equality in all aspects of life, including the workplace.

The context of Cyprus

There is a lack of literature on the matter in Cyprus, as most of the literature is international. After the war in Cyprus in 1974 the needs of resettlement and rebuilding the economy led to the increase of demand in the labour market, thus the increase of participation of women in the labour force (Stavrou, 1992). In a country after war, patriarchy typically becomes harsher and publicly associated with nationalism and militarism.

Cyprus Labour Law "aims to ensure equal opportunities and conditions of employment regardless of gender" (Dimarellis & Ioannou, 2018 p.). As a part of the European Union, Cyprus is obliged to follow the guidelines of the EU, however the research conducted in Cyprus and Greece examining the legal order in employment has shown that there is not gender

equality at work. The data demonstrated a "pathogenesis in the labour markets that needs to be overcome. Balancing family and professional life are crucial in combating social stereotypes, occupational segregation, as well as the glass ceiling effect, in order to achieve substantial gender equality in employment life" (Dimarellis & Ioannou, 2018 p.259). On top of that in Cyprus important issues such as equality and inclusion are not even close to be considered as worthy of any priority (Kyprianou & Veziroglu, 2011), also, Cyprus demonstrates high levels of racism. Immigrant worker tent to work in specific sectors and positions depending on their economic status, country of origin and gender, for instant immigrant women tend to work on low-skilled positions no matter of their education level. (Georgiadou, 2019).

In Cyprus there is a tendency for older people such as grandfathers and grandmothers especially grandmothers to take care of the children while their parents' work. This happened in larger scale in previous decades as older women did not work or they were retired. This often was an easy and fast solution on who would take care of small children while their parents were in work. However, the last decades more women and men with grandchildren are working, which makes the option of grandparents watching the children not a possibility.

Research conducted in Cyprus examining the profile of women developing enterprising activity and their companies' characteristics as well as their concerns and needs, has shown that 46% of women entrepreneurs were between the ages of 31-44. Also, 82% of them was married and with fertility rate 1.9, additionally, 52% of these women were coming from middle class upbringing, 33% from middle-upper class, while only 8% came from poverty (Nearchou-Ellinas & Kountouris, 2004). These results indicate that socioeconomical background could be an important factor on the path of a woman's career. According to the Cypriot Department of Labour (2006) in general, Cyprus has a high employment rate of 68.7%, with women's participation being satisfactory 58,5 percent. A significant change for women in recent years has been a trend away from low-skilled employment and toward ones with higher educational

qualifications. Education advancements have also resulted in an increase in the number of women entering the labour force. Specifically, in every 100 women almost 40 between the ages of 15 and 64 with a lyceum or equivalent level of education are working, whereas the figure jumps to around 81 for university education graduates. It has been proven on a global scale that as women's abilities and education levels improve, so does their participation in the labour force. However, as these data have been collected in 2006 and they do not go deep as to how many women are working on low-skilled positions and why they follow this career path. Hence, further research must be conducted on the choices and preferences of women leading to low skilled positions in the context of Cyprus, thus this research could fill the gap in literature and bring some light on the why women "choose" to work on low skilled positions.

Chapter 3: Methodological Approach

There is a large amount of international literature regarding women's career paths leading to low-skilled positions, however in the context of Cyprus, the literature on the topic is very limited. Hence, the topic of this research was really important, and the choice was made after a lot of consideration. Additionally, the way culture, stereotypes and norms affect the way people think and act are always fascinating, especially, when women working in low skilled positions are often overlooked. The specific purpose of this research is to identify different factors affecting women's career path leading to low skilled positions. Specifically, the research will focus on the context of preference, choice and motherhood and how these affect women's career path.

It was evident that quantitative methodology would not be as effective for the aims of this research as qualitative methodology, hence the approach employed was qualitative. The choice of qualitative methodology was the best taking in mind that it would provide the researcher with the experiences, perspectives, feelings, and opinions of the participants on the topic. Qualitative methodology offers complex forms of evidence to complex questions. One can understand a topic from purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) also, one can focus on the "why" a situation occurs the way it does. It is sometimes asserted that qualitative approach lacks the objectivity of quantitative methodology. However, this is erroneous as it has an objectivist thread, as the researcher's subjectivity can allow them to accurately understand the word. The researcher's subjectivity can bias the research although this can be evaluated as a benefit of acknowledging subjectivity and reflecting (Ratner, 2002), even though subjective as such is something used to describe quantitative research.as it is further argued by Ratner (2002 p.3), objectivism as an ontological approach reconciles subjectivity and objectivity by arguing that objective knowledge necessitates "active, sophisticated subjective processes—such as perception, analytical reasoning, synthetic reasoning, logical deduction, and the distinction of

essences from appearances." Subjective processes, on the other hand, can improve objective understanding of the world. Hence, the interpretive approach used on the research. Which it transcends the aforementioned distinction between subjective meanings and objective reality, as it focuses on the investigation of cognitive forms, which on a large scale regulate institutional activities and societal realities (Talja, 1999).

Methodology

In qualitative methodology, the researcher has a variety of tools to collect data such as interviews (structured, semi-structured, unstructured), focus groups and observation. For the purposes of this research, interviews were seen as the best fit, as the aim was to let the participants share their life experiences and describe their career paths. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted since they provide some structure while still allowing the interviewer to add anything if they feel is necessary. They also validate the process as the same topics were discussed at all interviews, with the exceptions of occasions where the participants did not wish to discuss a specific topic (Hannabuss, 1996).

However, it must be acknowledged that interviews have some possible drawbacks. As research has shown that there is a difference between the cultural ideas or beliefs that people can usually talk about and the culture that drives action and what people actually do (Ignatow, 2007). According to Pugh (2013, p.43) "interviews can only access people's after-the-fact rationalizations" hence there is a limitation on the understanding of the kind of information available in interviews, especially in-depth interview. The information taken from an interview have been criticized as "superficial, as at best reflecting people's wishes about themselves." Therefore, as from the nature of the topic and the type of the interview, where participants had to discuss their life paths, it was observed that participants wanted to present themselves in the most admirable light hence they were giving "simple answers to factual questions, belief statements about what they think …" (Pugh, 2013 p.50). The data collected are retrospective

data as the participants would share their perceptions of their roles and the role of other in their life. Information can be seen as inaccurate as memories tend to decay exponentially as human grow older. There is no way to predict how accurate a particular cognitive data set will be. If informants agree on information that they independently supply, there must be a reason for this. Norms and actual experience are the two most likely causes. In the absence of a strong specified norm, agreement should indicate shared experience (Bernard et al, 1984 p.512).

Hence, the interviews conducted were in-depth. This type of interview allows the interviewer to "deeply explore" the emotions and perspectives of the participants on the topic (Guion et al, 2011). Four of the main characteristics of the in-depth interviews are the open-ended questions, the recording of responses, the seeking for understanding and interpretation and their semi-structured format.

Before starting the interview process, the first step was to create a basic guideline of what topics were ideal to address, in order to obtain the most relevant and accurate information. For this purpose, an interview guide was created (Appendix A). The interview guide was the interviewer's tool for keeping track of the topics being covered. Also, an information - consent form (Appendix B) was created for both parties to sign in order to ensure the anonymity and privacy of the participants and for the participants to give their consent on the recording. In addition, it was decided that each participant would be given a unique code from the beginning to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

The Recruitment Process

The main research question was "what factors influence women's career paths leading to low skilled positions?" taking into consideration preference, choice and motherhood. For the specific purposes of this study participants were women between the ages of 40 and 60 who are currently working or had worked previously in low skilled positions and have children (the age of the children was not a restriction). The age group was chosen based on the fact that the

researcher wanted to explore the factors that affected the career paths of that specific age group, as they have a more complete career path. Hence, they would be able to provide a useful collection of data for enhancing the research aims. Even though the age group at the beginning was set between the ages of 45 to 60, because of the difficulty to find participants of that age group and the limited time available, it was though as necessary to change the age limit.

Moreover, it must be noted the difficulty to attract candidates to participate in the interviews. Firstly, as the timeframe was short and secondly the subject of the research is a sensitive subject from the perspective of wanting people to share their life stories. A third reason might be that the participants could not understand the purpose and the concept of an academic research. Also, people are usually really suspicious, and it is difficult for them to trust someone claiming on conducting research and asking them for personal subjects. Hence it is a crucial factor that the research is being conducted ethically and communicating that it will contribute to the society in some way (Henry, 2005).

The participants recruiting was done by creating a network from mouth to mouth. The first few participants came from the close environment of a family member of the researcher. This was both a blessing and a curse as it provided me with participants but as it was later shown on that they might felt obliged, which has affected the data collected as they were careful on what to share. The few participants after were introduced to me by other participants. At the beginning it was difficult for them to trust the anonymity of the process, however when the consent form was brought up and reassuring them that their identities would be protected, they would agree to proceed. Again, this hesitation could possibly had affected the data, as they were sceptical and unsure on what to share.

The Interview Process

When each woman agreed to participate in the research a contact was established though a call with them. After briefly explaining the subject, we would agree on a place and

time to meet for the interview. To make the process easier for the participants they could choose a quiet location to conduct the interview, as to ensure that they felt comfortable and relaxed. They could also pick whether to do the interview in Greek or English; however, 10 of the 11 participants decided to conduct the interview in Greek because they felt more comfortable expressing themselves in Greek, as it is the mother tongue of nine of the participants. Before beginning each interview, the topic of the research was described again, and participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions they might had. At the same time, participants filled a form with their demographic information (Appendix C), such as presented below in the Table 3.1.1.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were allowed to openly recount their lives, starting with their childhood. However, most of the participants felt more at ease answering specific questions. participants were informed that the interview process would be recorded, as the researcher would later hear the interview and transcribe it, in order to do the data analysis. For this purpose, a recording application from a mobile phone was used. It was made clear that participation was entirely voluntary, and that each participant had the ability to terminate the interview procedure at any time, and that they were free to leave the study at any time. Also, the researcher gave the option to set some topics as off limits when the participants did not wish to discuss them, as some topics are really sensitive.

After all the information were given and any questions were answered, the recording equipment was turned on, which it signalled that the interview had begun. A significant point to emphasize it is that participants after the end of the interview, when the recording device was switched off, several participants felt more comfortable and provided additional information which were important for the research. Hence the researcher took notes on any related points made after the official interview. The fact that participants felt more relaxed after stopping the recording can make one believe that the data collected are not as rich and true as

what they could be if participants felt more comfortable. Each interview took approximately 40 to 45 minutes to complete, with the exception of two interviews that lasted roughly 30 minutes since the participants did not feel comfortable talking about their childhood or partner.

The Sample

In the following table (Table 3.1.1) are presented some important information about the sample.

Table 3.1.1. A presentation of the sample.

Code	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Higher Education Level	Marital Status	Number Of Children	Ages Of Children
X1	46	Cypriot	Cleaner	College	Divorced now in a relationship	2	21 and 15
X2	49	Cypriot	Cleaner	Primary	Married	3	31, 27 and 19
X3	61	Cypriot	Cleaner	High school	Married	2	38 and 36
X4	43	Cypriot	Cleaner	High school	Married	3	12, 8, 2
X5	45	Cypriot	Sales Assistant	High school	Married	3	11, 8 and 6
X6	47	Georgia	Sales Assistant	College	Married	2	25 and 21
X7	56	Cypriot	Cleaner	Primary	Married	4	37, 35, 32 and 28
X8	60	Cypriot	Cleaner	Secondary	Married	2	30 and 37
X9	44	Cypriot	Cleaner	Primary	Divorced now in a relationship	1	6
X10	51	Cypriot	Receptionist	College and now studying to acquire a university degree in law	Married	4	31,28,21 and 18
X11	45	Filipinas	Housekeeper	College	Married	1	15

There are certain limitations to the data. To begin with, 8 of the 11 participants are from the same occupation, which may have influenced the findings as previously stated due to their relationship and feeling obligated to participate. Furthermore, all of the individuals are either married or in a relationship, thus single mothers in the sample could add to the findings. Another aspect to mention is that because of the participants' ages, they were able to share a more comprehensive career path than a younger participant could. However, participants are not of the same generation, which may have influenced the results but provided a fuller view of women's career choices leading to low-skilled positions. In addition, to improve the data, the sample could include additional women of diverse ethnicities.

The Analysis Process

Generally, there is a variety of methods used to analyse data in qualitative methodology. The method used for the analysis of the data collected was a combination of a thematic analysis and interpretive analysis - where the data of the interview are being analysed at a macro-sociologic level. The analysis begun with the first approach, which it was the thematic analysis (Dixon-Woods et al.,2005). Every step is presented next for the better understanding of the process. The first step was the recording of each interview and making notes when something important came up. The second step was transcribing the recordings using the method of verbatim meaning writing down exactly the same words spoken on the interview – word by word. As 10 out of 11 interviews were conducted in Greek, transcriptions were also in Greek. However, for the purposes of this research the important parts were later on translated in English. The third step was open coding meaning reading the transcriptions and creating headings for different topics discussed. The fourth step was evaluating the headings and merging the ones similar to each other. The evaluation was done based on the similarities of the different headings, as similar or the same topic was being discuss. The fifth step was a repeat of the fourth step until a final list of the thematic categories was created, which included

three themes; 1. Social Status: Family & financial status as a factor affecting women's career path, 2. The nature of work and support from family or third parties and lastly 3. Participants personal life and their partner. Lastly, the sixth step was choosing the best quotations supporting each category and lastly, the seventh step was beginning writing the analysis, as suggested by Burnard (1991).

Taking in consideration the aforementioned, the analysis was conducted beyond on what the participants said but to how they said it. This was done by making notes during the interviews and while listening to the recordings of the participants voice tone, as well as any remarks or comments made during the interviews or right after. As Weiss (1994, p.181) mentions that "people tend not to be fully aware of their emotions and their motivations. This does not mean that their self-reports have to be disregarded. Rather, they should be treated as incomplete."

Reflection

Reflecting on the interviewing process, the fact that the researcher was a young woman may have been a role in their willingness to participate in the research. However, their familiarity with the researcher's family member had an impact on the data obtained, as they could not express themselves as freely, and they may have felt obligated to participate while not genuinely wanting to contribute. Furthermore, some of the participants may have a misconception about academic research and its benefits.

Chapter 4: Analysis & Discussion

In the chart 4.1. below one can briefly see the career path of each participant.

Chart 4.1. The career paths of the sample
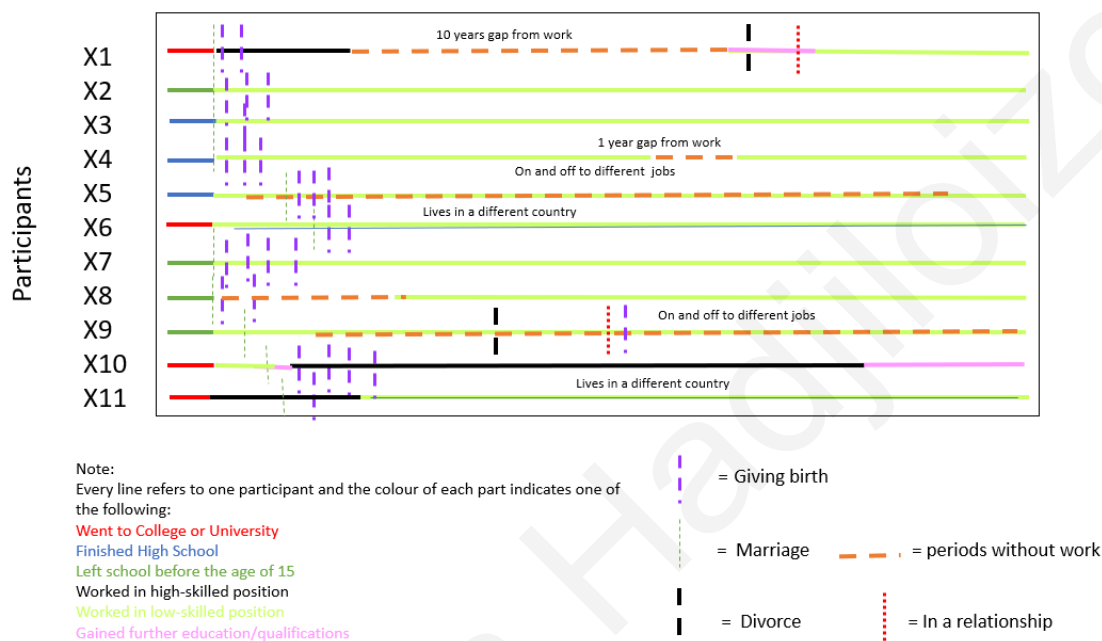
From a first glance at the chart, it is visible that two out of the eleven women participating had worked in high skilled position at some point of their career. It can also be seen that everyone after getting married they had children. Also, in the chart is not clear when they changed positions as during the interviews none of them referred to every previous job position, they had. Right below there is a more extended discussion and analysis on the findings of the research.

From the thematical analysis three major thematical categories were found explaining women's career path leading to working at the moment in low skilled positions: 1. Social Status: Family & financial status as a factor affecting women's career path, 2. The nature of

work and support from family or third parties and lastly 3. Participants personal life and their partner. Each category is being thoroughly discussed below in order of importance.

Social Status: Family and financial status

This first category encompasses the role of the participants' families, particularly their fathers, in the decisions they made at the beginning of their lives. To begin with, it should be mentioned that, with the exception of one participant who did not wish to discuss her childhood, the family model/structure of ten of the participants was the nuclear family. The majority of the participants (nine out of eleven) grew up with their mother at home raising them and doing domestic work or, in two cases, assisting on the family business and farm on an as-needed basis. Also, with the exception of one participant, the others mentioned that their parents had primary education. As participant X2 mentioned "*My father finished primary school and I think my mother as well, I am not sure, but it was definitely something like this*". Another participant said

"*My father was a farmer…my mother was at home with us, with ten kids she had to take care of us and sometimes she helped my father, and we were going along to help them as well. Both of my parents have finished primary school.*" (Participant X7)

Also, participant X2 mentioned, "My parents had finished primary school, my mother was staying home, and my father was doing any job he could get." This depicts the social status of the nine individuals. Their parents had little to no schooling and worked in their or others' farms or did anything they could to make money, such as helping transfer large objects, assisting others in little jobs, and nearly anything else that would allow them and their family to survive.

Participant X1 mentioned

"My father was drinking; he was an alcoholic…while growing up he did not pay us any attention. Amm he was working as an accountant, so we had to move a lot because he was changing jobs. Amm and my mother was working in factories, in stores as sales assistant…" This has definitely affected not only the career path of this woman but also other aspects of her life. Supporting even more the argument that parents have an immediate effect on their children's adult life. In addition, when X1 was asked if she had received while growing up support from her family she said, "*My mother supported me, but my father was in his own world…he was not there for me"*. It is worth mentioning that the same participant said moving on "*Things that happened in my childhood definitely affected me… I have depression and I was going to a therapist until recently*". This indicates that people's childhood and upbringing affect them as adults, literature supported by different researchers examines the relation between childhood and the different effects they may cause in adulthood in many forms such as anxiety (Smith et al, 2009). This shows that what happens at one's childhood can have direct or an indirect effect on their adult life. While it also, indicates that women coming from low social class are more likely to end up in low skilled positions.

It was generally given that five out of the eleven participants were left with no other option then to stop their education in order to support their family financially. Either by finding a job in a factory or either by helping in the family business or farm. As one of the participants said, "*I stopped going at school because I had to find ways to support my family…".* This is a significant aspect influencing their career path since by discontinuing their education, people limit their potential possibilities when selecting a career later on. Since the labour market is very competitive, high-skilled employment are more likely to require academic capabilities, which one obtains mostly through education.

Also, it was mentioned by four of the participants that they had to help with the raising of their siblings. As it was mentioned that "*We were six siblings, and I was the oldest… I was like a mother to my siblings I helped my mother with everything*" (Participant X3).

Everything aforementioned can be used as indicators that women had no other choice than to stop their education in order for them and their families to survive. Some of these women understand that helping with their siblings so their mother could work or helping by bringing money at the table was crucial for some of these families, however it is undeniable that this choice of stopping their education so young definitely affected their career path. It must be considered that their parents made this decision for them. This decision of their parents was made with what they believed was the best at the given moment as participant X7 mentioned "*These was what they knew…they were doing what they thought was best…*". Additionally, these decisions are a consequence of their own believes, ideas and education. Therefore, it is argued that for five women the choice of finishing their education and following their dreams to study specific subjects to persuade a career was made for them in advance, without them having any saying on the matter. The financial status and the low class of their family and their need to survive did not give to these women the opportunity to receive proper education, which definitely affected their career path.

Moreover, the analysis showed that the participants fathers had an important role on how their education path would advance. For instance, the parents of eight of the participants did not believe that women should get educated, but they should stay at home taking care of the family and domestic works while the men should be educated to find a work to support his family. As participant X7 mentioned

"*All of my brothers went to university; we were 6 boys and 4 girls. The boys went to university, the girls because my father was from a village, he believed that girls should not*

study, instead they should work and help in the house with the raising of the other children, to assist their mother in the domestic works. The reason we did not go to university was because our parents did not allow us. Only my brothers received good education…my brothers are now getting good pension as they worked for the government... he (her father) left only us girls"

when asked if she felt that she was treated unfairly she responded "*absolutely, however I am happy from my life course*". This is important as one can understand that this topic is extremely complicated. First of all because feelings are involved towards their parents, partners and children. These emotions and relationships with others (i.e. their children) could make them not wanting to change the final result of all those options which let them to be at the point they are now. Secondly as the participants had time to rationalize and accepting everything that happened in their lives in a way to cope with life. Many phycologists have researched in depth the connection between neurology and accepting or forgetting a negative situation in a way to cope and move forward (Baumeister et al, 1998).

Additionally, in other cases their father did not allow them to go to study what they wanted and stopped them from following their dreams. As participant X10 mentioned

"*I wanted to continue my studies by going to university right after I finished school, actually I had been offered a scholarship to go in a university in Greece, but my parents did not allow me to go. They believed that after you finish school, high school, you have to find a job so you can be financial independent. Eee this hurt my feelings because I really wanted to go to university…I must admit that it still bothers me and that's why I am studying to get the degree now. Because I had dreams for a better life. Now that I have the chance even if it's kind of late, I took it, but I always wanted to do it.*"

This demonstrates how traditional gender roles, as well as patriarchal family structures, influence women and their professional paths. Because it depicts the power dynamic between

a man and a woman, as well as the sense of ownership that parents have over their offspring. The word of the parents was law and kids should oblige or face the consequences. This effect is heightened and more obvious in relation to the lower social class.

The same participant (X10) when asked if her parents supported her other decisions she said

"*Well because I got engaged very soon after this…when I was nineteen. It was what I said before that one thing brings the other. Because I did not go to continue my studies, I got engaged and then I found a secretarial job and, in my parents, mind the logical order was to get married and then find a job so I did… after starting my own family amm I was independent from my parents, I did not discussed any decision I had to make with them, I was discussing them with my own family…I can't say that they affected any other decision I made because I did not let them.*"

This instance is worth discussing since it demonstrates how disadvantages can accrue over time. As a result, if one starts from a disadvantageous position, one's viable options become limited, and one cannot easily "escape" from this path. However, as it seems in this case (of participant X10) it is not impossible.

In addition, participant X1 said that

"*…they send me to a local college, but when I asked them to help me go abroad to further continue my studies they said no because my father believed I was immature…if I could take the time back, I would have gone abroad…financially they could have sent me but he (her father) did not want to*"

Also, participant X4 said that "I wanted to go study in Greece, but I choose not to." When was she asked why she made that choice she responded "well I think that I was not ready for that emotional separation you know? I stayed and I went to a local college while I helped

my parents at their business" later on she said that if she had the opportunity to take the time back, she would follow her dream. The parents' wishes, particularly the fathers', were granted, despite the fact that this choice would affect the lives of these women.

Back to the point, everything aforementioned indicate that the patriarchal family structure and family opinions and ideas, which were affected possibly by their parents as well, had a vital role on the development of these women's career paths. It was demonstrated from the data that even when eight of these women desired to take a particular path, they were not permitted to do so, while the other three had some more freedoms they as well at one point were not allowed to continue with the path they wanted. Four of the participants openly said that their fathers were the ones making critical decisions that affected not just their professional courses but also their life paths. This cannot be isolated from the patriarchal structure of society as the one exists within the other. As literature mentions patriarchy keeps women controlled and submissive, and to dismantle it in order to work for women's development in a systematic manner. Patriarchy provides barriers for women to advance in society. Since patriarchal institutions and social connections are to blame for women's lower or secondary status. Patriarchal system prioritizes men and, to some extent, inhibits women's human rights (Sultana, 2010). Therefore, the standards, and the possibility of a stigma, of the time period in which these women grew up, demonstrate the women of the age being examined had very limited options and their decisions been made on the information they had. As in the context of Cyprus, especially at that time the focus was on creating family and just finding a job to keep surviving. Therefore, their decisions related to education and marriage were immediately affected by society, including their family and their social status.

The nature of work and support from family and third parties

This category refers to the job positions these women have access from the beginning of their careers up to today, as well as their nature and their opportunities to advance in their

careers, as well as how the support they have received or not regarding their children affected their career path. With the words support and help are being included the financial or emotional assistance, as well as more practical help such as babysitting the children, giving them a ride or taking them at their extra- after school activities and any kind of other similar assistance.

Ten out of the participants did not remember much or had much to say about their employment journey, especially when they experienced periods where they changed jobs frequently. As X10 said

"…I don't have much to say about the jobs after I left from that job. At that time, it was really easy to find a job especially after I got the secretarial certificate…If I did not like the environment or the people there I would leave. I remember I went in for a job and the next week I quitted…".

It appears that four women with at least some qualifications said that getting a job was simple because they had many possibilities. This was not the case for the other women who did not have any qualifications, even for identical low-skilled occupations. It's possible that because they possessed some qualifications, they interpreted the availability of employment differently from those who didn't.

Participant X5 noted "Ee I don't have much to say before this job as I was just doing anything I could, like sales assistant in different jobs and other similar jobs."

This indicates further the limitation for seven of the participants to find jobs they could apply as they were not qualified enough. For the four women with some qualifications, it seems that it was easier, as they had more options. However, for the rest it was harder, and they would even apply for positions they did not like. Specifically, X2 said that they had opportunities but limited "…I had to work on factories or as a cleaner in different shops, I did not have the knowledge to do anything else". Participant X1 mentioned

"I was working for 10 years as an accountant…I had to leave because my son had health issues amm my husband was heavy-handed; he was always yelling … My son got his frustration out by pulling his hair out, he was five years old. Him (her son) and I went to a phycologist regularly. When he was eleven years old, he got diagnosed with diabetes…My husband told me to stop working because his salary was enough to support us…I was unemployed for ten years. I started working again three years ago after a friend of mine propose me for this job…it is not my ideal job; it does not pay enough but it has good working hours…hopefully I will find something else, but I have to begin from the start again…"

This shows that qualifications are not always the most important factor in a woman's career path. In this situation, the thing that affected her course was that she was persuaded by her husband, who prioritized his job and professional advancement above hers due to the caring responsibilities for their children. Taking a long-term break from one's profession could have a substantial impact on the possibilities available to women who want to re-enter the workforce. This is because the workforce is a mechanism who constantly evolves, which does not include many policies for women returning to work after taking a break. Also, she mentions "good working hours", which is interesting as good hours are the ones that allow her to also act as a family carer.

When X1 was asked what is stopping her from getting the certificates, she needs for her dream job she responded

"They will not hire me. Amm when I got the secretarial certificate, I would send my CV to different companies, but they would not hire me. Amm my ex-husband told me that probably was because of my age. I know I would be disappointed, and I now have to begin from the start". This demonstrates that even when women attempt to improve and expand their professional paths, they are met with additional obstacles, such as preconceptions that a

secretary must be a young, beautiful woman. The participant X1 stated that in order to get certified, she needs re-study from the beginning because she no longer remembers anything, and it is extremely difficult for her to do so at the moment.

Additionally, almost every one of the participants (ten out of eleven) made the choice of their occupation based on the working hours, especially when they had kids in young ages as one said "ee a criterion for applying to a job was definitely the working ours. I did not want my children to be raised away from their mother..." also another said, "I did not have anyone to watch them, so I had to work only the morning hours when they were at school". Even though their salaries were in the middle range, the flexibility provided by their occupations was sufficient to keep them content. The defining feature influencing women's career pathways here is not the position's working hours, but rather the duty these women feel to be present while their children are raised. In regard to access to day-care and the ability to afford childcare.

Another factor keeping them at these positions was the good environment "I wanted to be a teacher…now with my job I am close to children, every time the asked my assistance and I can help them I feel complete" "hearing them laugh and play" "At this job the environment is nicer from my previews job. Now we all lough, we tell jokes the supervisor is nice" another on added "I am not planning to leave this job, it is not the best job, but it has great environment, very friendly…".

Moreover, five out of the participants stopped working for a period of time to stay at home with kids either because there was no one else to take care of them or because one of their kids got sick and they stopped working to be with them, as some participants said "…I had to go ee to Greece with my son for a year because he got sick so I stopped working for that time period….ee my husband could not stop working he had to provide for us like he still does…after that it was difficult for me to find a job again…" and "I was a full-time mom until

the kids begun school". This supports the argument made by Tomlinson (2006) that when women become mothers their values and priorities change, hence they make choices such as finding a part- time job or stop working.

While participant X11 said "I had to leave my country to come in Cyprus. My mother left and worked in Greece as a housekeeper". Interestingly enough this woman has a degree in Business Administration, when asked why she did not try to find a job related to her degree in Cyprus she responded that

"…*when women from country come in Cyprus they are expected to work as housekeepers or cleaners. I would never get an opportunity to work on my degree… in my country I was working in position related to my degree, but the money was not enough I had to leave because it's easier for women to find a job in a foreign country then men…*" (X11, came in Cyprus in the age of 26 from Philippines)

Moreover, eight of these women are in their current job position for the last at least 7 years. What make the women stay in their current positions while before that they changed vacancies too often. This was because they found stability in a job fit for their lifestyle, also the job environment is definitely a plus keeping them satisfied. Also, 7 out of eleven women finish their work at 3o clock in the afternoon allowing them to take care of other business they have to attend such as watching their grandchildren "after work I am watching my grandkids until 6o clock, when their mum finishes from work" (participant X7)

When asked if in the future they would change job most of the participants answer with a dose of humour as X3 said "no dear ahaha I am just waiting for retirement" and X8 said "ee now?? No, I will be retiring soon" while three out of eleven said they would persuade another career, as X10 said "yes definitely after I get the degree I would be practising as a lawyer". The older participants believe that they have completed their career circle and are now ready to

retire, while some of the younger participants want to change completely their career path by getting further education.

This category supports that the career related choices of these women were made based on various reasons related to their job based on the job and their kid's needs. Some more specific reasons as supported from the above are not finding a job with good environment or flexibility and most importantly part time positions. As supported from Grompton (2002) research works with flexibility or by offering part time positions employers attract women who wish to work but at the same time they have other responsibilities such as kids. As well as the importance of having a work culture and environment who understand the importance of flexibility when one has to take care of someone else. Also, in cases where they did or do not have any support from their parents or their parents in low it was way more difficult and, in some cases, impossible for them to work or invest in their education. This is being supported by literature as Tomlinson (2006) argued that women when choosing for a job their financial abilities play a major role on their own work-life balance preferences, such as whether they can afford to pay for private childcare.

Participants personal life and their partner
This thematical category refers to the lives of the participants after leaving their first family and creating their own. It also includes some insights given from the participants about their life with their partner regarding sharing domestic works and taking care of the children.

To begin with, 10 of the participants got engaged and married at a young age. "I got engaged and at twenty years old I got married and then I got pregnant." (Participant X11) Also, participant X3 noted that "…I got married really young at the age of sixteen…" In nine out eleven of the cases the participants did not fell in love with their husbands to let in marriage, they were introduced to each other and after taking a liking into each other they moved forward

with engagement. "I got married at 21 years old, our families arrange the meeting and we liked each other and then we got engaged" (X10)

It is worth mentioning that interestingly enough eight of these women made the decision to get married as they believed they would gain more freedom and they believed that it would be an escape from their strict fathers. Participant X8 mentioned "Look I don't have any complain but the engagement at the time was a way to "escape" (she used air quotes with her hands) my father". Also, participant X10 mentioned that even though she believed that she would be freer with a marriage she said that this was not the case "I thought with marriage I will gain the freedom I did not have with my father ahahah I was wrong, but I was still happy with my marriage". At this point it should be noted that as mentioned above it was observed that these women did not fail to mention at least once that they are happy with their marriages and how things turn out eventually. Of course, it is not the purpose of this research to say that these women are unhappy or to be absolute about these women having no choice at all. However, it was interesting and worth mentioning that almost everyone, with the exception of one participant, pointed out their happiness. It could be their form of reassurance to the researcher (and even themselves), a means of dealing with everything that has happened in their lives. Yes, all of these things happened in their life, but they made it through and are at least happy.

This indicates the limitation in options for these women, as mentioned in a previous chapter marriage for eight of these women was a way to escape from their parents. This obviously corresponds with the patriarchy and the escape from one man – the father by running to another – the husband, but nonetheless at the same time it correlates with the social class these women belong to. The social scenario of women in Cypriot society included marriage, as unmarried women still get criticised from society about their decisions regarding their relationships-marriage and divorce.

The interviews with the two women from Georgia and Philippines were the most difficult to analyse and understand, as their childhood and upraising was different from the other participants. Different cultures with different norms and understandings of the world, which are a factor on the way children are being raised. Hence the difficulty of understanding how they were raised and how these women perceive themselves and the world. However, some things can be included as one of them said that she had to leave her country leaving her child there as it is for women is easier to find a job in a different country and send money to help supporting her family. Specifically, she mentioned

"*I had a job there, but I had to leave, the money was not enough for us to survive… I left because women find easier job in other countries then men…I am staying here until I have enough money to send my daughter in medical school…*"

This again shows various factor affecting women and their career. First, the fact that in her country having one job is not enough to support her family financially and as she said "my mother used to work in a similar job, but in Greece" shows that in they culture this is common practise which affect the way they perceive their careers. She understood that because of the culture of Cyprus she could not find a job in the field of her degree but rather she had to work as a housekeeper as she said "…girls from my country can't find any other job except from cleaners or housekeepers…".

Three of the participants tried to get further education as adults, where two of them who had support from their family could manage to succeed.

"*I have tried to ger further education, all these years I tried to get the audit certification, but I failed the last exam twice, my ex-husband helped me financially and emotionally after we separated. Amm he actually helped me to get a secretarial certification.*" (X1)

While others waited for the kids to grow up to get different certificates or degrees as participant X1O mentioned "Now that the kids are grown up…I was able to go and do it. Ee it was something I wanted to do for very long…"

Most of these women (10 out of 11) did not receive assistant with the domestic work or with the children as one participant X1 said

"*When he (her now ex-husband) was home because three days of the week he was staying in another city for work and once a month he was going in Russia for work, he was home for very short time periods but when he was home, he was yelling to the children…. He did not help in any other way except from financially, he only cared for his career and nothing else.*"

The participant X2 mentioned that *"No, he was not helping but I was not expecting him to, he worked two jobs to support us with extremely long working hours. However, when the kids were sick, he was there…"* Eight out of eleven participants they mentioned that most of their husbands would help when the kids were sick, needed a ride and they would do heavy work at home such as gardening or taking out the trash. Also, seven out of the eleven participants noted that they got lucky with their husbands as participant X8 said "he was always working to bring food on the table" she also added "he was doing his best, he had as example his father, well he could be worse". This indicates the patriarchal problem of women having to worry about their husbands and them considering themselves lucky for marrying a good man, one who behaves with decency, as everyone should. Another thing to note is that in one case the participant followed her husband in a different country "After getting married me and my husband we move into England because he was living there, we stayed for ten years, I had my daughter and after that we came back…" (X3, married at 16 years old). Again, indicating that women often are trapped in the

Women who had some assistant with the children (6 out of 11), especially when the kids were younger and in need of constant supervision, they were able to work full time "I was able to work as an accountant because my parents in low would watch the kids" (X1). While women who did not had this "luxury" or they did not have the financial ability to send them in day-care, either they had to stop working completely or to find a job that would allow them to take care of the kids.

"After having my children, I was working from home. Emm I was repairing shoes. I had them (clients) to bring them to my house and I was repairing them when the kids were sleeping. Ee I did not have anyone to watch them for me. When they began school, I found a part time job so I could be home when they finished school…." (X7, mother of four children)

Women still worry about the care of their children while they work, as one participant with young children now said, "I am happy at my job now…if things get more difficult, I will have to leave…difficult in the sense of eee with the babies, the extra school curriculums…because of time". This shows that even today having support from family, especially in a country where the culture is being raised by grandma, it is really important if a woman wants to build a career and she is not financially able to pay someone else to watch them. As you can tell having the father to help is not an option as he works too many hours.

From this category is easy to tell that most of these women did not have any assistant in domestic work and with the raising of the children. Again, here exists the traditional nuclear family model (in the case of the two divorce participants they are currently in another relationship, and they live together) where women have to take care of the house and children but a bit different at the same time as they work either part time or full time. This was something that researchers were examining from the seventies, with researchers discussing the pressure of women in dual-career families (Hunt & Hunt, 1977).

Chapter 5: Limitations & Suggestions

Despite the fact that there is a considerable quantity of international literature exploring women's career paths and choices in various scopes and providing much data regarding different fields, this material is quite limited in Cyprus. As a result, studies like this one are important. However, there were certain constraints encountered when doing this research.

For starters, due to the sensitivity of the subject, several participants were hesitant to open up and share details about their lives and personal experiences. Also, throughout the participant recruitment phase, it would be ideal if not a good amount of the participants came from a connected network tied to a familiar individual of the researcher. As it appears, some of the participants felt obligated to participate, which resulted in them not feeling completely comfortable sharing their tales or perhaps portraying themselves and describing their lives more attractively than they could be. Furthermore, at the start of the study, the goal was for participants to disclose their memories on their own, with little or no interruption from the researcher. However, because participants did not know what to say, practically all interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. As a result, several participants provided brief responses and did not elaborate on areas that could be critical to the research. The fact that the researcher was not experienced enough to guide them without leading them to precise responses could be a contributing factor, as well. Furthermore, the fact that the interviews were conducted in Greek and later on some parts of the transcripts were translated in English should be considered as a limitation, as some words may not have been accurately translated and mislead their comprehension.

As previously said, there is considerably little literature about women's career prospects in Cyprus. As a result, more research on women's career paths and choices should be conducted in Cyprus, as they are frequently blamed for not having a "successful" career path or being in

decision-making positions due to their own preference for family and their own choices of not following these types of career paths. Furthermore, more research on women's professional paths might be conducted with women of various professions and ages, in order to collect more data and create a clearer idea of the factors affecting their career paths. Also, a similar research could be conducted with more participants and maybe adding focus group, as a tool of collecting data.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to identify the various factors influencing women's career paths leading to low-skilled professions, with a focus on the context of preference, choice, and motherhood. According to the findings of the study, the situation is extremely complicated, with numerous factors influencing the career pathways of women working in low-skilled occupations in Cyprus. The study identified three major themes of factors, with further subclasses within each. First, there was the social class, including the role of family and financial status; second, there was the nature of work including the type of their positions, opportunities to grow in their professions, and a preference for part-time jobs. As well as the help and support they have gotten or continue to receive from family and/or third parties, such as financial, babysitting, emotional support, and so on. Lastly, their personal lives and their partner, which included thoughts and opinions of the participants on what they would have done differently.

The objective of this study, however, is not to argue that women are entities without their own beliefs, thoughts, or to promote the notion that women are incapable of making their own decisions and initiatives. This research contends that some women are obliged to make specific judgments depending on information provided at various periods, which are influenced by external circumstances such as social status, family, financial status, children, job environment, outside assistance, and so on. Furthermore, the study backs up the general literature that opposes Hakim's Preference Theory. It particularly supports the arguments used by McRey (2003) and Tomlinson (2006) in their comments against Preference Theory. Finally, the research indicated the general struggle of women having a career path in other fields requiring higher skills or a full-time vacancy, as they did not receive education in their youth and as their lives progressed in different directions with different struggles and other things

being prioritized. However, in some cases, given the correct circumstances, women can have a full-time job or a career path in professions requiring a higher skill set.

Women's career paths in Cyprus working in lower skill positions and/or part-time have been and continue to be influenced by a variety of factors, some of which are individual and specific to each situation, while others, such as culture and social class, are collective. Many of these women, as well as society, do not comprehend these aspects and the role they play in decision making, which can lead to other issues such as self-blame and other unpleasant feelings. Hence, research such as this one has value and contribute positively in literature.

Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

- It is stated that they have the right to decline to address a topic, stop recording, or end the interview at any moment.

- Are there any issues that are off-limits?

- Respond to any questions or concerns that participants may have.

- Speak freely and without regard for the order of the questions. Tell me your life narrative; there are no bounds or stated issues - if there is anything left at the end, I will ask you.

Make certain that:

Filling a personal information form

They have been given an information sheet

Sign and read the consent form.

Can you simply recount your life to me, possibly from the time you finished school, or wherever you want to start, to today, noting the highlights?

Childhood

1) Can you talk to me about your childhood?

    a) Where and with whom did you live?

    b) How would you describe your financial situation then?

    c) Was there an event that affected your life back then?

    d) How you feel about them (i.e. the above), how you see them now

2) Could you tell me a little bit about your parents and siblings?

    a) Education level, primary occupation, marital status, and age.

    b) How would you rate your family's (parents and siblings) support? What are the issues?

    c) How would you say your family has influenced your life choices (both job and non-work)?

3) What, in your perspective, was expected of the girls after they left school?

    a) Do you believe your parents expected you to do something specific?

    b) What are your thoughts on these expectations?

    c) Why do you believe he followed (or did not follow) this model?

    d) Do you believe that these expectations have shifted for today's young women?

4) If we go back to when you left your family's house, you can tell me:

    a) When did you leave? Under what circumstances? Why?

    b) What were the family members' reactions?

    c) How did you feel about the change at the time?

Education

1) Could you tell me if you had any educational plans in the outset? What exactly were they?

2) What did you do after school?

    a) What made you choose this industry? Why did you choose to stay in Cyprus rather than travel abroad?

        i) When did you quit the educational system?

        ii) Why is this so?

        iii) How did it affect you?

        iv) Why did you decide not to continue your education?

3) What would you change if you could? Why?

4) How would you assess the educational possibilities available to you?

    a) Would you consider them sufficient to chose what you truly desired?

    c) What are your thoughts on this? How do you feel about not being able to pursue your original educational goals?

    c) How do you perceive these opportunities in comparison to those accessible to younger women today?

5) Do you intend to further your education or training in the future?

    a) If so, what type of training/qualifications do you have? Why?

Career

1) When you left formal education, did you have any employment plans?

    a) What were these plans?

    b) What factors do you think had influenced the formation of these plans?

    c) How would you now see these plans?

2) What was your first job?

    a) When did you start there?

    b) until when?

    c) Why did you choose this job?

    d) Do you think you were satisfied with this work? Why?

    e) What was the settlement of the work?

    i) Working hours?

    ii) Do you think they were arrangements that suited you at the time?

    f) Why did you leave?

3) Where did you work?

a) When did you start?

b) Until when?

c) Why did you choose this job?

d) What was the settlement of the work?

    i) Working hours?

    ii) Do you think they were arrangements that suited you at the time?

e) Do you think you were satisfied with this work? Why?

f) Why did you leave?

4) Do you currently work?

    a) When did you begin?

    b) Why did you choose this position?

    c) What is the work's settlement?

        i)Working schedules

        ii) Do you think this arrangement is still appropriate for you?

    d)What are your thoughts on this position?

5) How would you assess the employment opportunities available to you?

    a) Would you say you had the freedom to choose the career you wanted at the time?

    c) What are your thoughts on this? How do you feel about the fact that you (didn't) follow through on your original work plans?

    c) Do you wish you had done something differently in retrospect?

    d) How do you compare these opportunities with those available to younger women today? Would you have done anything different if you made choices based on today's opportunities?

6) Do you have any plans for future employment?

    If not: Why not?

    If so: Can you talk to me about these plans?

    a) In your opinion, what factors influenced these plans?

    b) Would you say that these designs reflect your ideal preferences?

    c) How do you see your career coming to an end?

    d) Have these plans changed in any way since your original plans?

    e) Do you think it is possible to implement these plans?

    f) What factors do you think may affect their implementation?

    g) How would you compare the opportunities you presently have to carry out your plans to those you had in the past? In comparison to the chances accessible to today's young women?

Family and relationships

You mentioned to me that you are... Does it bother you to talk a little bit about your (former) partner?

1) When you left formal education, did you have any plans for marriage?

    a) What were these plans?

        i) Were you planning to get married? Wedding timing?

    b) To what extent do you think that these plans reflected your real preferences and to what extent were they influenced by other factors?

    c) Have you revised these plans since then and today? Why?

    d) Looking back, how would you see these plans now? How do you feel about their (non)realization?

2) Can you tell me some basic information about your partner (education, profession, working hours, age)?

3) How would you see the support you get (get) from your partner for:

    • Household duties

    • Care of pies (and care of the elderly)

    • Financial obligations

    a) How do you think this differs from the support that women have from their partners today?

4) How would you see the effect your partner had on the choices you made in your life (work and non-work)?

5) How would you see your partner's attitudes/views towards working women, career for women, distribution of domestic tasks, etc.?

    a) How do you feel about these views?

    b) How do you think this has affected your work and non-work choices?

    c) How do you compare these views with the views of younger men today?

6) When you left formal education, did you have any initial plans for children?

    a) What were these plans?

        i) Were you planning to have children? How many? When (timing)?

    b) To what extent do you think that these plans reflected your real preferences and to what extent were they influenced by other factors?

    c) Have you revised these plans since then? Why?

    d) Looking back, how would you see these plans now? How do you feel about their (non)realization?

7) Can you discuss the arrangements you had for childcare?

    a) Who cared for your young children?

        Officially or informally? Paid or not? Hours of care?

    b) How would you see these settings? Are they the ones you would ideally prefer? Why?

    c) How would you compare the childcare options that women have today with those that were available to you?

8) Would you say that you were ready for the challenges and adjustments required to combine family with work? Why?

9) Can you tell me something about your life outside of work and family?

> Hobbies, time allocation, friends, personal time

10) In general, how do you manage to combine family obligations with the other obligations you had?

> a) Would you say that you have managed to balance the obligations of family and work?

> b) What would make it easier for you to have a better balance in your life?

Health

1) Was there or is there a health issue?

2) How did it affect you? (Physically, psychologically)

3) How did it affect you in relation to your family and work?

Closing

Is there anything else you'd like to discuss or report before the interview is over?

Appendix B: Information- consent form

Information for participating in research

Title of the research:

"Women's Career Paths Leading to Low Skilled Positions: Preference, Choice and Motherhood."

Researcher:

Athanasia Hadjiloizou

What is the topic of the research?

The research is conducted as a part of my thesis for the master's program in Human Resource Management in University of Cyprus. The research will be focused on the experiences of women of the ages 45-60 with children. Specifically, I will examine factors such as preference, choice, and motherhood.
The interview is predicted to last for 45-60 minutes.

Will my answers be anonymous and confidential?

Every information you will give during the interview will be confidential and anonymous. You name and the names of any other people mentioned will be confidential as well. The recording of the interview will be saved in a computer with password. Every documentation regarding this interview will be saved in a computer with password as well. The data will be used for academic purposes.

Why should I participate?

The participation in the research is voluntary. If you agree to participate than you can stop the interview at any point or leave from the research. If you decide to leave from the research, then the data will not be used.

In the future with whom I can communicate?

Name of the researcher: Athanasia Hadjiloizou

Email Addresses: athanasia.hadjiloizou@gmail.com

Terms and conditions

- I have read the information.
- I had the chance to ask questions and I have received satisfying answers from the researcher.
- I understand that parts of my answers can be used anonymously for my thesis or future academic publishes.
- I give my consent to record the interview.
- With a complete knowledge of everything aforementioned I give my consent to participate in the research.

Participant's signature_____

Researcher's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C: Personal information form

Research topic: «Women's Career Path Leading to Low Skilled Positions: Preference, Choice and

Motherhood. »

Personal Information

_____

Participant's Code: _____

Name: _____

Last name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

Place they grew up: _____

Play they live now: _____

Marital status: _____

Number of children: _____

Ages of the children: _____

Education: _____

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