A qualitative study on the impact of sleep loss on the daily lives of working mothers.
Introduction and rationale for the study

The population of working mothers juggling a job, raising children and managing the home in Ireland at present is significant, 63% of women aged 20 to 44 are employed, with 59.5% of women in this group with at least one child aged 3 or under (Central Statistics Office, 2014).

Women are more likely to take on a domestic role and look after the home and family compared to men (Davis, Greenstein and Gerteisen Marks, 2007).
Introduction and rationale for study

Associations between maternal employment, long hours, and non-standard schedules, and reduced sleep (Bianchi, 2000; Kalil et al., 2014; Perrucci et al., 2007).

Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study, it was found that parents with children aged under 6 years old experienced the highest level of disruption to sleep (Hagen et al., 2012).

Venn et al, (2008) Couples with children (n=18 children at home). 26 couples, sleep diaries and interviews, women more likely to sacrifice sleep, the ‘fourth shift’. Retrospective accounts from older parents.
Introduction and rationale for study

- Research indicates that disturbed sleep is often associated with:
  - poor cognitive performance (Polimeni et al., 2007),
  - depression (Meltzer and Mindell, 2007),
  - anxiety (Gelman and King, 2001),
  - high levels of stress (Meltzer and Mindell, 2007)
  - poor wellbeing (Gelman and King, 2001) in adults.
Introduction and rationale for study

Occupational performance is the ability of the individual to do what they need or desire to do, whereas engagement in occupations is more about participating in a role that the occupation fulfils (Rebeiro and Clarke, 1999)

Sleep issues have been linked to occupational performance and engagement issues (O’Donoghue et al., 2012).

Not studied in working women with children specifically (O’Donoghue et al., 2012).
Research question

– Research Aim: to explore the experience of working mothers with sleep deprivation, and their perception of impact on occupational performance and engagement.
Methodology

- Qualitative research project: Descriptive phenomenological design
- Design is used to illuminate an under-researched area (Patton, 2002).
- Used to provide rich, detailed, narrative data of the individual lived experience (Sandelowski, 2000).
- Participant selection: purposive- those who have experience of phenomenon (Fossey et al., 2002).
## Methodology: data collection tool

### Building a picture of the participant, their day to day life, their child/children and their sleep patterns
- So tell me a bit about your family/home life/children..
- Describe an average day at home/at work..
- Tell me about your sleep patterns..

### Occupational performance incl. routines and habits, occupational profile
- Describe a typical weekday for me..
- Are weekends different..
- Tell me about a day at work..
- What are your hobbies/leisure pursuits..

### Impact of sleep on this occupational performance and occupations that occur in their daily lives
- How does tiredness affect you, for example in work/at home/ with family and friends?
- Does it impact any other areas?
- If you slept for a longer duration or your sleep was of better quality, what do you think would change?
Methodology: Data Collection

- Sample size- aim for six participants (Dworkin, 2012)
- Granted ethical approval by CMNHS REC
- Recruitment: posters in crèches (NUIG crèche)
- Inclusion/Exclusion criteria: Female, over 18, at least one child under six, work at least one day per week.
- Interviews began with an informal discussion (Moustakas, 1994)
- Interview questions were piloted four times and edited to reflect feedback from volunteers
Methodology: Data analysis

- Interviews were transcribed verbatim (5 interviews carried out)
- Qualitative data analysis was carried out using NVivo software
- Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was employed.
Results

- Impact on mood and its subsequent impact on occupation
- Effect of sleep loss on occupations not seen as essential
- Impact of sleep loss on relationships and social life
- Profound impact of sleep deprivation on paid employment
Results: Altered mood and its subsequent impact on occupation

“And I think, I think it definitely contributes to more anxiety, stress, and more, I wouldn’t say depression, but leading on to low mood. Definitely.” [B]

The impact that increased anger had on the occupation of caring for children

The impact that feeling paranoid due to tiredness had at work

Impact increased anger had on relationships at work and at home
Results: Occupations that were not seen as essential were neglected

– “It’s more about tidying up the house. That we push the maximum away, and when we have to do it, we do it.” [D]
– “…tiredness does impact you, you don’t want to exercise.” [A]
Results: Relationships altered due to tiredness

– “So you know, we tend to mix socially with people who have got kids, and we go to their house early in the evening.” [A]

– “Yeah it has a huge impact on my relationship with my husband, because, as I said, by the time nine o’clock comes around, I want to sit down and be left alone. I don’t want to talk to him.” [B]
Results: Employment profoundly impacted by sleep loss

- Work most impacted occupation
- “...with work, it’s difficult to get things done.” [A]
- “I have a three-hour session on Thursdays with first years, and the weeks that have been especially tough, it is very difficult to feel engaged with them, to pull them.” [C]
Results: Employment profoundly impacted by sleep loss

- Negative impact on cognitive skills required
- “I had more mistakes when I was tired. Forgetting steps when I was in the protocol. Thinking I was doing good stuff when I wasn’t really.” [D]
- Difficulty progressing in work due to tiredness
- “…there are a couple of jobs in the next grade, you know, and it’s probably, maybe quite possibly stopped me from going for those jobs.” [A]
Discussion

– Work was profoundly impacted for all of the women who took part in the study.
– Millward, (2006) women struggled to meet the demands of what was expected of them at work following maternity leave.
– Lim and Dinges (2010) in their meta-analysis of the impact of tiredness on cognitive variables, found that vigilance, working memory and attention most impacted components.
Discussion

– Waldfogel, (1998) found that there was a wage gap between women with children and those without
– Difficulties with sleep following having children could be a compounding factor in the difficulties with women in progressing in their careers, and thus in earning a higher wage
Implications

– Health promotion in the workplace should take into account sleep deprivation and its impact for women who are particularly affected
– More manageable, less time consuming health promotion initiatives easy to integrate into daily life
– Possibility trial a workplace initiative for working mothers, peer support, participants mentioned wanting understanding
References

References


References


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References


References


