

‘Design thinking as a strategy in employee engagement in  
Irish private security sector’

Prabhuswamy

MA in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

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## Abstract

The research thesis was undertaken to Investigate and examine the role of strategy and its influence on employee engagement in Irish private security sector. The author was eager to Interview Security officers at various levels with wide range of services in the private security sector to understand if there are any correlations between their drivers of engagement and those discussed in the academic literature. In this pursuit, the researcher Interviewed and engaged with security officers from different organizations and across the hierarchy to gain accurate and rich data about employee engagement. The researcher used sample size of six and found that all the six employees were engaged in the organization.

Furthermore, this research study explores how employees are benefited from the implementation Human capital strategies how internal and external factors impact on their engagement. This was important because often the employees in private security sector are deployed in different work location and how work location would impact their engagement levels is discussed in the findings chapter of the dissertation.

The study also reveals that an effective and successful implementation of Human Capital strategies is positively correlated to the level of engagement in the sector, and lack of training and trust emerge as the main factors that have a negative impact on the workforce this has been discussed in the dissertation.

This dissertation recommends that organization should develop new systems and strategies which creates employees a platform to share their feedback and improve their engagement level.

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## List of Abbreviations

HR: Human Resources.

SHRM: Strategic Human Resource Management.

IT: Information Technology.

ERP: Enterprise Resource Planning.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter the researcher will introduce the reader the theory of employee engagement and Design thinking as a strategy its background and content. The researcher will provide rational for the research while highlighting goals, objectives and aims, questions and more importantly the significance of the research.

According to CIPD factsheets Employee engagement defined as “being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to other” it also states employee engagement creates a platform for the organization to focus on the people management strategy ([www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk), 2016). From reading this thesis the reader will acquaint how Design thinking as a strategy influence employee engagement.

According to (Robinson, et al., 2004) states that engaged employee exhibits positive attitude towards the organization and its value, by understanding of business context and the bigger picture they also work to make things better with the willingness to go the extra mile by helping their colleagues at their work and as well keeping themselves up-to-date with developments in their specific domain.

From reading this thesis, it is very evident that there are different definition and opinions on employee engagement and how people management strategy influences employees in their performance.

## 1.1 Background and context

The Irish private security sector was chosen by the researcher for many reasons, primarily because the researcher connection to the sector. The researcher was employed as Intern in an organization which develops software solutions for the Irish private security sector. The growing importance to the sector due to uncertain conditions due to various crimes and terror attacks, positive outlook for the private security services and the lack of research on employee engagement in Irish private security sector.

This dissertation examines the theoretical implication of how strategies in human resource management can influence employee engagement and can gain a competitive advantage. As the importance of employee engagement has created a widespread interest over the past years (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). In conjunction, most of the studies conducted by various academicians and researchers share the same conclusion: that engaged employees are one of the major source of organizational competitiveness. (Salanovaa & Schaufelib, 2008). Poter (1985) suggest that competitive advantage is the heart of the organization's performance in this competitive ecosystem.

Thus, in this dissertation the researcher focusses on investigating how design thinking as a strategy can influence employee engagement and drives of engagement which are discussed in the literature review which act as catalyst to improve performance of employees in the Irish private security sector.

## 1.1 Objective of the Research.

The aim of this research is to integrate the components of Design thinking strategy to create best in class Human resources systems and practices which are integrated with employees and organizations. This research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how drivers of employee engagement and engagement by design can affect employee's performance. In this research three important dimensions are investigated (a) the possible implication of using Design thinking strategy to develop HR systems and applications. (b) will the use of HR systems help in empowering employees in expressing their thoughts and every day operation issues. (c) the impact of innovative strategy on employee engagement.

**Research question 1:** How HR systems and applications play a significant role in engaging employees at work in Irish private security sector?

**Research question 2:** Are HR systems and applications are existing in Irish private security sector? If so, how do they impact on level of employee engagement?

**Research question 3:** How drivers of engagement influence performance at work?

## 1.2 Rational for the Research.

The rational for this research is discussed from two important dimensions: theoretical significance and practical implications. In the below sub-sections each of these dimensions are discussed.

### 1.3.1 Theoretical significance.

The phrase “The War for talent “may be a cliché, yet in today’s business ecosystem it is as true as a statement ever. Talent is a very important asset to the organization where in managers need to examine their own organization to assess the competency and capability of its human capital. Garber (2013) suggest that workplace should be more enjoyable and engaging. (a) Its organization who must create challenging roles for employees. Challenge makes task more interesting, where in its an opportunity for employees to strive for to achieve and accomplish. Employees need to be challenged to stayed engaged in their roles. It is also important to understand difference between more work and challenging work. Employees should be given goals and objectives to achieve. Employees will feel highly satisfied to stretch and achieve a specific task which earlier they

thought impossible to accomplish. However, if a challenging task is given to an employee when is not ready to take it up he may feel frustrated and it is important to provide all the necessary resources to accomplish a specific challenge. Resources here means training, access to relevant information. (b) Motivation: motivation is a principal factor in employee engagement. Motivation comes from within. However, is the role of supervisor or manager who can lead employees to become motivated. One way is by giving them challenging task (as mentioned above) and by creating reasons to perform task better. The other technique is by providing reward and recognizing their efforts at work (this will be further discussed in more detail in Literature review chapter). (c)Support: Support plays a very important role in engagement. Employees should feel that the management supports them in task and careers. A manager or supervisor can show their support in different forms. For example, by giving an appreciation note and by providing necessary resources that an engaged employee need to perform a challenging task. If employees feel there is a lack of support by the management they may become disengaged. Through employee's eyes support is a true measure that is received from the management's commitment for the concept of employee engagement. (d)Recognition creates a more engaged workforce. Employees should be recognized and appreciated for their efforts at work. Recognitions in any form are welcomed by employees at times an informal "thank you" from their supervisor increases the engagement level. (e) Camaraderie: organization should create a platform for employees to work in teams. Employees enjoy being part of team with shared goals and objectives. In the process of achieving organizational objectives they develop greater synergies which increases the levels of engagement. Thus, in this study the researcher discusses all the above said variables to understand the phenomenon of employee engagement with a qualitative stance.

### 1.3.2 Practical Implication:

The research aims to investigate the practical implication, primarily it is very important to examine how Human resources management systems and software applications can impact employee engagement. To develop an effective software system, it's vital to analyze the business environment, human resources requirements, their functionality. Implication from this study will benefit the Human Resource Management, policy makers, by giving various perspective to engage and manage their workforce. The second factor of this research is to investigate the HR variables that could help managers in understanding importance of engagement and why employees are engaged or disengaged at work, because disengagement would reflect on workforce performance. This helps the managers to determine suitable strategies to boost employee's performance. Its organization responsibility to provide an ecosystem which enhance the potential of workforce. Martin & Moldoveanu (2003) states that over the last decade there is a significant interest in Human Resource systems and HR applications and employees are the focus in achieving business competitiveness.

### 1.3.3 The significance of studying Irish Private security sector.

Over last few decades there is a significant growth in the Private security sector. This has created an interest for the researcher to Investigate what are the variables that affect the employee engagement in this sector and how management manages its workforces where majority of the time the workforce work in different work location. It was a matter of curiosity initially for the researcher to understand how the employees interact with the organization environment as they often work remotely at distinct locations. This study discuss how HR systems can act as bridge to connect employees and their organizations.

## 1.4 Organisation of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Starting with this Introduction and the remaining are organized as follows.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Literature Review of the thesis, where in it outlines the definition of employee engagement, and it also focuses on the debates in employee engagement and engagement by design concept. Furthermore, it discuss how strategy strategies can influence employee engagement.

Chapter 3 Focuses on the Research Methodology section. It outlines on the methodology used in the study. followed by data collection data analysis, and ethical consideration.

Chapter 4 discusses on the findings. In this chapter the researcher draws the employee experience and there view on the drivers of engagement.

Chapter 5 focusses on discussion of results.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusion, recommendation and costing, CIPD personal learning.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader the conceptual definition of ‘employee engagement’. It then provides perspectives of employee engagement and why it is important. Furthermore, while we understand the importance of employee engagement it is necessary to understand the drivers of employee engagement. In the sub-section of this chapter the researcher reviews how engagement by design has been valued by organizations and the relationship of this to work environment. This study takes further steps by examining employee engagement from strategic human resource management stand point. This analysis is discussed in the literature review because it is important to understand how strategies can influence employee engagement. By implementing a holistic perspective of HRM which includes strategies, policies, practices it helps to draw analysis on both the job and motivational processes that may be triggered by the work environment, the relationship between the employee and his manager or supervisor. Accordingly, this thesis argues the importance of strategies that shape the HR policy and practices. Thus, the chapter further discuss the resource based view and institutional view of strategic human resource management. Both these concepts play significant role in examining employee engagement. In conclusion, the objective of this chapter is to understand the framework and techniques of employee engagement and how management’s choice of choosing specific strategies can influence employee engagement.

## 2.2 Definitions of Employee Engagement.

Over the past decade employee engagement has become one of the primary focus in the organizations. Employee engagement has been defined by many ways by scholars, practitioners some of the enduring definitions are, employee engagement is concerned with how well an employee is connected to the organization by means of emotional, intellectual and his commitment towards organization. An employee's positive attitude towards works is directly reflected on his performance. An engaged employee looks for ways to improve his performance in the organization, some of the other characteristics are employee believes in the organization goals and vision and has active participation to make things better. Employees respects colleagues and helps in their challenges to deliver effective results. An engaged employee can be relayed upon and works beyond his job description as he sees the bigger picture and keeps oneself updated in their work (Robinson, et al., 2004).

The CIPD defined it as 'a combination of commitment to the organization and its values, plus a willingness to help out colleagues. It goes beyond job satisfaction and is not only motivation. Engagement is something that employee has to offer, which can be required as part of employment contract' (www.cipd.co.uk, 2016).

The success of the organization depends on how well employees are emotionally or intellectually connected. Customer satisfaction in terms of loyalty and services is the resultant of the positive feelings the employees carry towards the business or the employer. Furthermore, engagement creates platform to bring the best performance one can by increasing their competency at work and by adopting innovative ways in delivering goods and services (Azouri, et al., 2013). Redman and Wilkinson (2013) outlines that an engaged employee during the year takes 2.5 days sick leave whereas disengaged employee may take 6.2 days sick leave in comparison as per Gallup findings. This statistics explains the consequence of engagement on the performance of employee and in-turn organization as well. However, the employee engagement has not been without criticism.

Saks (2006) argues that organization engagement is different from employee engagement, and engagement is not an attitude. It depends on the degree to which an employee goes above and beyond to achieve their performance standards. Bhattacharya (2009) adds to this argument by saying employee engagement levels decrease in situations such as mergers and acquisitions, when

there is a change in organizational structure, salary freezes. It may also result in quitting the organization.

Khan (1990) outlines execution is the key for operation excellence. Engaged workforce always execute their responsibility cognitively, physically and emotionally so that they can achieve excellence in their area of work. This school of thought captures many aspects of engagement at work. Byrne and Philo (2016) argue and outlines that Job performance, involvement at work, organizational commitment and job satisfaction are all distinct from engagement, these aspect of work create a space for relatively new concept of employee engagement. To foster employee engagement areas like leadership, job design, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, meaningful work plays a vital role. Furthermore, companies are also developing products to boost employee engagement. Thus, this study also aims to find out how design thinking as HR strategy can create HR products which boots employee engagement.

In conclusion, different school of thought have described employee engagement in numerous ways. This creates a scope for further research in employee engagement. Some have defined engagement as employee's positive attitude towards work. some argue that it's not an attitude it's about being present at work. These arguments justify that there is more to employee engagement then just positive attitude or being present at work. Meyer and Allen (1997) outlines employee engagement is concerned with employee's commitment at work and employees develop affective, continuance, and normative commitment towards organization.

### 2.3 Why employee engagement is important?

In this highly competitive global scenario and tight labor market conditions have created the need for organizations to have an engaging workforce to gain a competitive advantage in the market. Research suggest that engaged workforce increase productivity, and higher productivity leads to innovative and efficient delivery of goods/services which results in increased customer satisfaction. customer satisfaction has a high impact on organization performance and profitability. Profitability increase market value of the organization, this helps in retention of critical talent and increase faith and trust of employees on organization. Furthermore, it can foster loyalty among employees and increase organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) believes there is a strong relation between organizational commitment and employees work performance. Engaged employees exhibit strong affective commitments. These attributes make employee as brand ambassadors for the organization.

Employee engagement is important to all organization irrespective of any industry as the objective is to retain and value organization's human capital. Studies show that there is a correlation between employee engagement, customer satisfaction and profitability. Organization with an engaged workforce achieve 10% increase in customer satisfaction and 20% increase in their sales (Harter & Mann, 2017).

Furthermore, in this study the researcher attempts to investigate why organization should focus on employee engagement? What are the potential benefits of having an engaged work force? In an interview with CEO Jack Welch when asked who does he measure a company's health, he replied "Employee engagement first, it goes without saying that no company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it. That's why you need to take measure of employee engagement at least once a year through anonymous surveys in which people feel completely safe to speak their minds" (as cited in Crook, 2008). Interestingly, this reply takes us back to what Khan (1990) outlines that engaged workforce while at work are more focused on their job roles then their personal selves.

Building on this 'Importance of engagement' Kumar and Pansari (2015) outlines that over past decade employee engagement has moved up on the priority list of the organizations, because engaged employees can make an impact to organizations success story irrespective of whether its

non-profit or profit, as engaged employees transfer their enthusiasm to the customer and by creating better products and services which has competitive advantage and the resultant is increased in profitability.

It was important to understand the importance of employee engagement for this research because, employees in Irish private security sector often work at the customer locations and it is highly important for the organizations that they are engaged.

## 2.4 Drivers of Employee Engagement

In the current ecosystem of business there is rapid globalization of products and services as a result organization are changing their strategy to suit business needs. To address the issues of reduced profit margin and high attrition rate organizations look inclusively to identify the key strategy. It's organization's Human resource capital which can help to gain a competitive advantage in this highly competitive business scenario. Furthermore, Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) states that employer not only check the rostering list for attendance of the employees, they ensure that employees are present emotionally, physically and mentally on everyday basis. This is because engaged employees out perform in their roles and exceeds employer expectations. Of late, employee engagement is concerned as one of the major driving force of the business. Employers use this as a strategic tool to gain competitive advantage.

Interestingly, academic scholars focus on investigating the key drivers of employee engagement and how it can impact the success of any business. There is always a strong connection between business success and employee engagement, this positive consequence of employee engagement has put this concept on the forefront (Harter, et al., 2002).

The argument continues, management consultants and practitioners are of opinion that employee engagement is much wider concept. Drizin and Hundley (2008) outlines that employee engagement considers employment life cycle and management should intervene at each stage of employment cycle and change organizational practices at all levels of the hierarchy. In

organizational practices, it is important to consider concepts which contribute to employee engagement namely, (a)strategic issues: Management style, ethics, diversity. (b) Core HR processes: recruitment and selection process, rewards and recognitions (c) Operational components: tools and technology used for day to day operations.

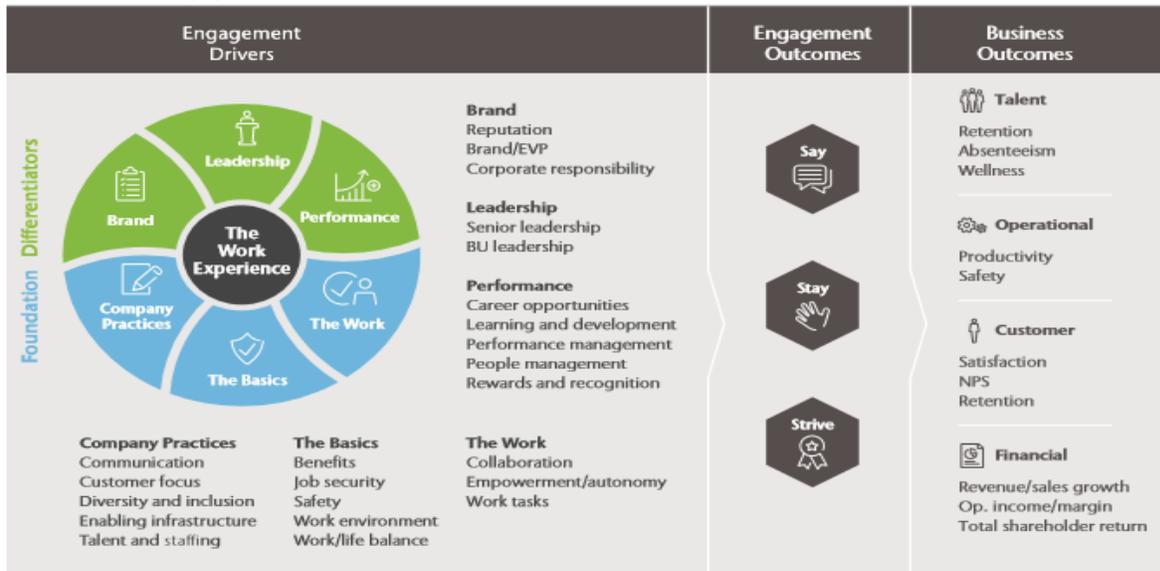
This study considers the importance of strategies and HR processes and how it can impact operational components. This is further explained in the Findings and discussion chapter. The aim of this is to identify how a range of factors can influence employee engagement. In addition, Wright and Boswell (2002) argue that there is significant development in each area of HRM and each area has its potential gains for the organization. By identifying different drivers of engagement this study intends to bring the correlation between theoretical and practical implications of the concept of employee engagement. By saying this study doesn't argue that these are the only drivers in employee engagement, but these are prominent drivers which are relevant to the Irish private security sector where the researcher can relate through his research.

Building on to the study, Mani (2011) suggest employee engagement is the attitude of employees towards organizational goal and values. Which they exhibit through their commitment and involvement at work. Engaged employees show enthusiastic behavior while at work and extend help to their colleagues to improve performance in the job. The driving factors for this behavior are employee welfare, relationship among colleagues and management, empowerment and growth. Furthermore, research suggest that in the economic downturn the key drivers of employee engagement are career advancement, connections, and contribution (Wallace et al (2006), as cited in Mani, 2011).

Seijts and Crim (2006) argue that employee engagement is much wider concept as it affects the mindset of the employees. Engaged workforce can make a difference to the organization's growth as it involves the head, heart and hands of employees. Hence, it's important to consider the Ten C's as key drives of engagement namely, (1) Connect, (2) Career, (3) Clarity, (4) Convey, (5) Congratulate, (6) Contribute, (7) Control, (8) Collaborate, (9) Credibility, (10) Confidence.

Interestingly, research shows that organization enjoys equal benefits as the engaged employee does and has a profound impact on business results. A study by Aon Hewitt show importance of engagement drivers and its business outcomes.

Exhibit:1 Employee Engagement Model.



Source: Aon Hewtti, (2017) Trends in global employee engagement.

The above exhibit illustrates how the engagement drivers function in the business scenario. Engaged employees exhibit three major behaviors at various levels: (a) **Say**: they show their passion by saying positive things about the organization. The outcome of this is less turnover and absenteeism, and better wellness. (b) **Stay**: by staying they show their commitment towards the organization. When employees stay for the long term, it saves a significant cost on talent acquisition. (c) **Strive**: this is where employees exceed employer expectations, they work towards organizational goals and ensure they accomplish given tasks within the time frame and offer help to their colleagues wherever it is needed.

According to Anitha (2014), organizations use employee engagement as a tool to gain a competitive advantage, because people who are also known as Human Capital cannot be duplicated by the competition. Hence, it's important for the organization to identify the key drivers and provide a platform where employees can come together positively to bring innovation to their work, which leads to better performance and effectiveness. Furthermore, the key drivers for employee

engagement are (a) Leadership (b) Work environment (c) Training (d) Team collaboration (e) Career Growth (f) Pay and benefit. Building on this argument, to increase the engagement level organization should have (a) good line management system (b) effective two-way communication system (c) Effective co-operation and collaboration among team (d) Work-life balance and empowerment (e) Employee well-being (f) well defined and easy accessible HR policies and procedure (Robinson, et al., 2004).

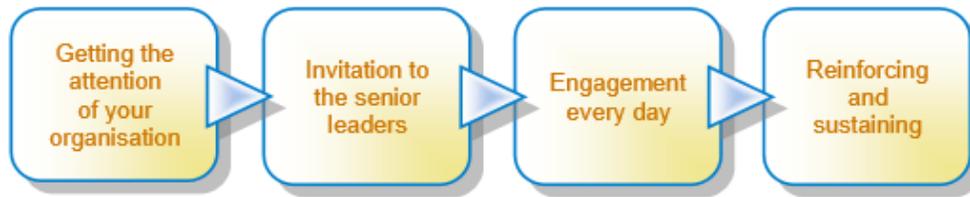
Having presented all the argument, in this study, the researcher focused on the six drivers as suggested by Anitha (2014) because the researcher found that through his investigation these are relevant to the Irish private security sector. These drivers are further explained in findings and analysis and discussion and conclusion chapter.

## 2.5 Engagement by Design

In this section, the researcher introduces the concept of engagement by design and its practical implication. The aim is to integrate the Design thinking strategy to employees and organizational level to gain a comprehensive understanding and how it impacts practically in the day to day functioning of the organization.

The extensive and evolving use of technology has changed the way the organizations operate. Organizations are challenged in developing new systems and policies to attract and retain talent. The question organizations facing is how to design and develop new system which help to engage and improve productivity in the workplace which is hyper-connected in the world of work. Fraser (2008) outlines that the landscapes of engagement are changing. Cutting edge technology has the ability to make a difference in all the sectors. In this scenario HR plays a significant role to design and deliver a fulfilling experience for the employees. As shown in below exhibit 2 : Engagement by design : four step process.

Below sub-section talks about each stages of the engagement by design process.



Source: Fraser (2008) Engagement by design

Organization rely on data facts to validated their performance during the fiscal year to publish their business results as this act as mirror of organization performance. Using these data facts HR plays a significant role in communicating results and getting the attention of employees. Employees performing their work has the best ideas to change or improve the results. This process creates an opportunity for employees to raise their engagement level. This strategy act as cornerstone for '*Design Thinking* strategy' because employees understand the issues at the ground level and they are understanding the problem area hence, they can come up with innovative solutions. This is further explained in findings and discussion chapter how Design thinking strategy can increase engagement levels.

The second step in the process is to invite senior leaders. With senior leader joining the working sessions with employees it creates an alignment as to how they can support the mangers and subordinates which results in better collaboration.

In engagement at every stage, it creates an opportunity for employees to build two-way communication system and focus on every day challenges and bring in innovative solutions. These kind of workplace huddles can increase engagement levels among the team. It provides a platform to the manager to interpret the organization communications and for HR to provide engagement tool kit which can help to shape their world of work.

Fourth stage is the reinforcing and sustaining where HR plays significant role by communicating the best practices followed, process improvements and it's a way of showing that organization trust employees ideas, initiative, and appreciating the team efforts to achieving the desired results

## 2.6 Strategic Human Resource Management.

In this section, the researcher introduces the reader about the importance of Strategy in Human resource management. The rationale for choosing this topic in literature review is because, as part of the research title talks about the Design thinking strategy and its influence on employee engagement.

Research suggests that the concept of Strategic HR was first introduced by Dyer 1984. The need to understand the pattern of strategy used by organization to address business challenges paved way for linking strategy to Human resource management. In Organization human resource strategy comprises of socio-political and economic decision taken by the management to train and manage organization's human capital. It helped to address the fundamental question of how to attract, engage and retain talent in the most cost-effective way to achieve the business objective (Boxall & Purcell, 2016).

Wright and McMahan, (1992) outlines that Strategic human resource management is in the evolving phase in the field of management. Strategic human resource management focuses on connecting all the disciplines of HR functions. It draws a pattern of human resource system to meet the organization goals and objective. By using models like resource based view it establishes the relationship between HR practices and organizational performance.

Strategic human resource management plays a significant role in private sector establishment. In private sectors to improve efficiency and productivity organization harmonize strategic HR characteristic with best HRM practices and policies (Mello, 2011 cited in Lim, et al.,2017). This is further explained in Findings and discussion chapter as how strategy can bring a difference in employee engagement.

### 2.6.1 Resource based view.

Mahoney and Deckop (1986) states that over the years workforce management in the organization has constantly evolved, it has changed from personnel to human resources and from administration to human resource management and so on. These changes are an indication of integrating different HR functions like recruitment, training and development, compensation and looking people management holistically. This has led to the development of SHRM which

takes a macro perspective approach and includes numerous practices of human resource management.

Boxall and Purcell, (2016) outlines that from the strategic human resource management point of view, firm's workforce plays a significant role in gaining competitive advantage. Hence, firms internal resource gets the major focus because Strategic human resource management is linked to transactional cost theories. As a result, this has resulted in the growth of resource based view.

Resource based view argues that organization workforce is economically valuable, which has the potential to maximize the opportunity and minimize the threats and they are difficult to imitate. They can create difference to firm's performance (Ruivo, et al., 2015).

In this study, resource based view is used as a frame of reference in order to comprehend how HR systems can contribute to increase levels of employee engagement which results in increased organizational value. Locket, O'Shea and Wright (2008) outlines that Resource based view resides, where very little information is known about organization resources. By assumption organization can't develop strategies and execute them. It is important for the organization to identify how exactly that one specific group is out-performing the other group.

In private security sector, employees are often work in remote and different work location and are always away from the organization. Hence very little information about employees is available. This is in agreement as stated by Locket, O'Shea and Wright (2008) on RBV. It is for this reason the researcher further investigates employee engagement in Irish private security sector as this is an ideal sector to study.

Wade and Hulland (2004) argue that resources and capability are two different aspect in resource based view concept, Resources are the inputs for the production process and capability refers to how effectively these inputs can be utilized in the organization processes on a daily basis.

Building on to the argument, Barney (1991) suggest that, the relationship between HR systems (IT Infrastructure) and firm's resources should be embedded in firm's daily business. This helps organizations to gain sustained competitive advantage. From resource based view stand point HR system can create greater value in developing organizations capability.

Interestingly, past research also suggest that HR system play a significant role in organization performance (Anderson, et al., 2011). Nicolaou and Bhattacharya (2006) found that HR systems (ERP) builds coordination among employees, which results in better performance and increased productivity. Bradford and Florin (2003) argue that if the systems are built without understanding the needs and requirements of the employees and business and if found very complex to use on daily basis this can have a negative effect on the employee performance because user productivity and acceptance play a significant role in the success of HR (IT systems) and applications. This is further discussed in Finding and analysis chapter how HR systems has impacted in to increase engagement in Irish private security sector.

HR systems play a significant role in leveraging the organizations resources and it is attained mainly through the capability that the HR (IT systems) provides (Lengrick-Hall, et al., 2004).

In this study, the researcher focusses to understand the relationship between HR systems and employee engagement in addition to it how to build HR systems using Design thinking strategy.

## Chapter 3 Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

Research is defined as something that people undertake in order to find out things in a systematic manner, which helps to increase their knowledge. Research is conducted by collecting and interpreting the data in a systematic manner with a clear objective to find out things (Saunders, et al., 2009). Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, (2010) argue that a research process should be conducted in a systematic manner but it should not be constraint or limitation by itself, it should have the flexibility and be open to change directions if required, because the ultimate objective of research is to find logical conclusion.

### 3.2 Research Philosophy

According to Saunders et al., (2009) Research philosophy helps in developing the knowledge, nature and methods used in the research process. The research philosophy is based on certain assumptions, assumptions are about the social actors and their values which is important because it helps the researcher to interpret his findings by using suitable research approaches. According to Quinlan, (2011) suggest that it is important to have a well-defined philosophical frame work as it can be seen in every section of research process and helps the researcher to answer the fundamental questions on the research. Philosophy framework helps in choosing the right methods to collect data and the knowledge required to answer the research question. After careful review of two important research philosophy that is ontology and epistemology where in Ontology speaks about the nature of reality whereas epistemology is concerned with acceptable knowledge. The researcher chose to use epistemology philosophy and choice is based on the important assumption made by the researcher and how he views the world, which is well supported by the research strategy and methods applied by the researcher in his work.

According to Fisher, (2004) states that in Interpretative research the researcher relays on processual perception because the Interpretative philosophy identifies the complexity in the subjects of research which also interprets and generalizes how meaning is developed through human interactions. This approach is widely used to discuss to the managerial role and strategic planning as well. Hence in this study the researcher will be using Interpretivism as the

philosophical frame work, which in-turn helps in developing the knowledge through interaction with the employees (Security Guards) in the Irish private security sector.

Another important philosophical framework developed from an epistemological position is the Positivism framework. Positivism see the world as having one reality which is singular and objective. Positivism relay on large samples of numerical data to formulate statistical hypothesis. Positivism framework is one of the appropriate methodology used for analyzing quantitative data (Quinlan, 2011). Hence positivism is not used in this research.

In this research study, the researcher uses interpretivism research philosophy. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that Interpretivism is concerned with the empathic understanding of human action rather than with the forces that act on it. Fisher, (2004) argues that the link between understanding and action is indirect because the world is a complex structure with many option to choose from and the action are not always clear. Interpretivism helps in developing knowledge and ideas through conversation. It brings out the perception of people to a specific topic and the position they take on the specific subject. In this study using Interpretivism frame work the researchers draws the perception of the Security Guards in private security sector towards the issue of management style and impact of use of various software application in day to day operations. Fisher, (2004) makes it clear that through a conversation one can get people opinions and how they perceive. In this study, the researcher uses multiple sources and probing questions in the interviews to generate rich data and keep bias at bay.

### 3.3 Research Strategy- Qualitative versus Quantitative.

Every researcher has an option to choose the method for conducting his or her research study. The choice is to choose between Qualitative and Quantitative methods. Quantitative approach is concerned with generating raw numerical data and which must be processed and analysed to derive a meaningful result. The data ranges from simple counts to complex data. For example, test scores, prices and so on. Data are primarily classified into two groups that is categorical data and descriptive data. To analyze and for easy interpretation various software applications are used from excel spreadsheets to more advance software applications such as IBM, SPSS Statistics, SAS, Minitab, and more specialized survey designed packages as such as SNAP and Sphinx Survey (Saunders, et al., 2009). Quantitative approach is proven to be more effective when used to

conduct research with substantial number of respondents where data can be measured and interpreted using various tools and technique. The philosophical roots of quantitative research are positivism and realism.

The qualitative approach is drawn from the constructivist paradigm (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This approach requires the researcher to avoid imposing their own perception of the meaning of social phenomena upon the respondent (Banister, et al., 2011). The aim is to investigate how the respondent interprets their own reality (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This presents the challenge of creating a methodology that is framed to bring out the opinions of the respondents rather its should not be from researcher's perspective. An effective means by which this can be executed is through interviews, or texts, where the response to a question can be open (Feilzer, 2010). Furthermore, the researcher can develop the questions throughout the process to ensure that the respondent further expands upon the information provided. Qualitative research is usually used for examining the meaning of social phenomena, rather than seeking a causative relationship between established variables (Feilzer, 2010). Thus, in this research study qualitative approach will be used because the research focus on employee experience of using software applications. Through Interviews the researcher can understand the emotional language of security guards, words spoken out of experience that describe their concerns, desires, and aspiration which influence engagement in the work place, and which is hard to explain in quantitative language.

### 3.4 Research Themes.

The themes are developed from the literature review conducted by the researcher. These themes aim to draw the perceptions of the security guards towards the use of HR software applications in their day to day operations at work place and how it would affect their engagement levels.

- How two-way communication can impact in every day operations and is there any impact on engagement levels?
- Work environment.
- Work -life balance and empowerment.
- Training and development.

- Team collaboration
- Pay and benefits.

These themes help the researcher to probe the security guards to get a meaningful response with an intent to develop a rich data for the research study.

### 3.5 Research Sample Size and Sampling Technique.

In this research study, the researcher will be using the sampling frame of working security guards in Irish private security sector. The population of security guards in this sector are very large in number and it is not possible to interview the entire population of security guards in Ireland. Hence the researcher will be choosing 6 security guards from three different organizations in Irish private security sector. As every organization has its own policies and procedure by interviewing guards from different organization would bring in multiple views from the employees. The study population in this research are the security guards working full-time in the private security sector with more than 2 years of experience with holding designation such as Door Supervisor, Cash in transit manager, CCTV operator, and Security Guard and fall in the age group of 30 to 60years. The researcher has chosen this wide age range because the participant with the age of 60 would have experienced the world without Human resource software application in early days of their career and it is now inevitable to use various applications hence they can bring unique perspective to the study. Participant will be contacted through emails. The email consists of Invitation letter requesting for participation for the study, complete details of place, time location for the interview after their perusal participant are requested to sign the consent form attached in the email.

In this research study, the researcher uses Non-probability sampling because it is not possible for the researcher to produce complete list of the population of security guards and his access is limited to few organizations in the sector. The researcher uses Judgmental sampling technique because this technique allows the researcher to identify suitable participant to complete the study.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

According to Quinlan, (2011) qualitative data analysis is a process used to analyze data with the objective to develop thick, rich and complete account of the data phenomenon under investigation.

Easterby-Smith, et al, (2008) states that Narrative analysis is the process of analyzing natural language data of how people describes or accounts for events, real or imagined. Which is widely used in organizational studies and helps in analysis of interview data. In this research study, the researcher uses narrative method of data analysis to analyze data generated through Semi-structured interviews. The data generated will be processed to word facilitated data transcription template. By using narrative analysis, the researcher intendeds to describe the relationship between the research themes and the findings from the interviews conducted during the study.

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration.

Bryman and Bell, (2015) states that it is important to all parties in the research study exhibit ethical behavior. The goal of ethics in the research is to ensure no one is harmed or suffered adverse consequence from the research activities. Therefore, the researcher will abide by all ethical procedures and compliances and following measures will be taken.

Participants are well informed about the purpose of study and participates are allowed to participate in interviews only after taking a written consent from them and it is a voluntary participation. In the interview request invitation interview schedule will be mentioned and will be planned as per participant's convenience. The participate age, job details are collected only to ensure they fall under the right fit for the study and these details are kept confidential. The data collected through interviews will be stored in compact disc format and will be kept in a secured location and will be destroyed after 6 months from the date of submission of the project to the university. The researcher will be using Harvard referencing format in the study.

## Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction.

In this study, the researcher collects the rich data through semi-structured interviews from the employees in Irish private security sector. The aim of this chapter is to provide insights of employee's experience at work. This has helped the researcher to comprehend the practices and processes by which different drivers of engagement in the sector operate. Using 6 semi-structured interview with a sample of professional employees, the researcher was able to explore the sources of engagement in Irish private security sector. In particular the researcher investigated the process chosen by leadership team in making strategy, HR practice and policy and its impact on employee engagement. Before starting face to face interview with participants researcher reiterated the objective of the study and the importance of the interview as it will help the researcher to gain understanding of the drivers of employee engagement in Irish private security sector. The researcher also explained that it's a voluntary participation and they could remove themselves from the interview at any stage during the interview. The analysis in this study was designed to answer the research question as mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2. The analysis was done by going back and forth of the transcribed data generated through interview sessions to identify the themes.

The findings in study is based on the rich data obtained through open ended questions. Open ended questions were used because participants can open-up and explain what exactly it means to them while working in the odd hours of the day and what motivates them to being engaged at work.

## 4.2 Interviewee's Descriptions

In this study, the sample consisted of 6 participants. The demographics and other details are presented in the table 5.1. In order get a complete understanding of both strategic framing and operation researcher interviewed two employees from the management side and four employees from the operation stand point. As shown in the table 5.1 management staff has Master's degree and four security officer's held professional certification. Irish private security is regulated by a statutory body known as The private security authority (PSA) which is responsible for licensing and regulating the private security sector in Ireland. All the security officer who participated in the interview were licensed by the private security authority. Two of the interviewees worked under 5years in private security sector and four interviewees spent between fifteen to thirty years in the sectors. With this combination of young and experienced professionals researcher was able to draw rich data for the study.

Table 4.2 Interviewee's Descriptions

Subject	Description	Number of employees
Gender	Male	5
	Female	1
Age	Between 30 to 40	2
	Between 40 to 60	4
Job position	General Manager	1
	Manager	1
	Security officer	4
Education Qualification	Master's level	2
Tenure in the private security sector	Diploma and below	4
	5 years and Under	2
	15 years to 30years	4

### 4.3 Employees Background.

The researcher to set the context straight and to gain the trust of participants started the interview with question 1 and 2, which ask the participants to explain their journey in private security industry. The distinct roles they played, years of experience. Interestingly all the six participants said they either happened to take up the role in security sector or they did not choose and they said maybe it was their destiny to work in the sector. One manager replayed he 'fell into it' because his previous role was of an accountant. While the participants were explaining about their background the researcher was keen to observe their body language and their confidence level to determine how engaged they were during their tenure. When asked were you engaged during your tenure of your service all the participants replied Yes. One of the security officer said he was very engaged and focused. He further explained the role demands focus always because they are in charge of security of specific location and threats can happen anytime and its was very important to be alert during is work time and their no scope for distraction. The person who mentioned this promoted as site in charge from security officer.

### 4.4 Work Ecosystem.

The researcher was eager to understand how security officer feel and what motivates them to be engaged when they were asked to work in different work location. Participants replayed saying that the role of security officer is very challenging specially when they are working on night duties in a remote location. They often work in different environment and they feel engaged when they are connected to the control room of the office or when they have right system and tools to perform their duties. One of the participants mentioned that he would be happy to work at modern corporate office as he finds people in the corporate offices are friendlier and they follow the rules and regulations. He said he feels more motivated and engaged as he has control over the situation. He can see what's happening in the premises by using CCTV cameras which are placed in and outside of the buildings. One of the participant who had 10 years of experience in the security sector he mentioned there were instance where client requested his organization to not to change security officer. He played a dual role as a receptionist and security officer as well. He spent two years

working for the same client and he felt more motivated working. As he is familiar with the environment knows the people with whom he was working and it was a modern corporate office with all the tool and system available from him to perform his duties.

#### 4.5 Leadership

The researcher through interviews investigated that it was a very challenging task for the leadership team to stay connected with team on a regular basis. It was said during the interview session by one of the manager that security business is a high volume and low profit business where in each supervisor or manager is responsible to manage 50 to 70 security officers and we always try to keep this number low as far as possible so that they have a better collaboration between supervisor and the security officer. To manage such high number of subordinates they use HR system where in security officer can log every incident happened during their working hours at the client place which later will be reviewed by his/her supervisor. These kind of system helps us to stay connected with the employees. Furthermore, the manager also stated that employees use this HR systems which they call as staff portal for various office purposes namely to request letters, to report a complaint and so on. This way employees feels they are connected to their organization as they often deployed in different work locations. When their issues are addressed they feel motivated. This way management wins the trust of the employees.

When asked to security officers does positive relationship with your management helps you keep motivated and engaged? All the officers said Yes, one of the participant said it's very important that our management trust us and we trust them too, because often we work at client location on we are not directly supervised. In this scenario trust plays a key role and this always helps us to stay engaged at our work.

#### 4.6 Communication.

Following on from the above, participants were asked how do you communicate with your organization and how organization communicates to you if there is any change in the policy and practices. All the participants confirmed communication plays a very crucial role in our work as

we always work in various locations. One of the participants who had more than 15 years of experience, stated security industry has changed so much when compared to 20 years ago. In the initial days of his tenure in security industry communication was a major challenge and we must wait for our supervisor to visit our sites but now we use staff portal to log incidents and they are updated live and we can receive feedback much swiftly. As security service is 24 hours business these systems help us keep our management informed. Furthermore, any updates in HR policy and practice in our parent organization are all updated in the staff portal and we get notification if there are any changes. We can also request uniform, walkie talkies other tools which are required to perform our duties through staff portal.

Interestingly, one of the participants spoke about the communication at the work location. He reiterated working in modern offices is more engaging and motivating because whenever an incident is reported there will be a swift response. In addition to resolving issues having effective communication mechanism helps us to build trust and rapport with our supervisor and with our people at work location as well. It makes our job more fulfilling.

One of the manager quoted that “its easy for me sitting in the ivory tower and framing policy, if it is not communicated to the staff on ground it’s a major failure of operations” hence communication plays a significant role in our business.

#### 4.7 Team collaboration.

Moving on to the next question, participants were asked how do you interact with your colleagues or team. All participants respondents positively said yes having collaboration among our colleagues motivates and it does impact over engagement level. One of the officer mentioned that in a lot of cases we work alone on a specific site. In this situation client employees will become our colleagues. It’s important we have a good cooperation and collaboration among us because at time when there is any incident employees at the work location can join us for immediate help, before I can call the control room and request for assistance. Especially in a retail store we often encounter shop lifters. When we identify the perpetrator, we would also need assistance from the sales staff cooperation to take it next levels. In these kinds of situation collaboration at work place does motivates us. Furthermore, a good relationship makes us feel more engaged and confident at

work especially when you know we have people around us supporting us. Clients see us as their staff though we work on contract basis. These kinds of collaboration will definitely make us committed and motivated at work.

#### 4.8 Pay and benefits.

Following on from the above, when asked one of the sensitive question, does pay and benefits effect your engagement levels. All the four-security officer among the six participants said yes it would affects to certain extent. One of the participant stated, “pay is a big thing because, private security industry is high volume and low margin business and in majority cases security officers are paid basic minimum wages”. However, there are some sites which carries a site premium. These sites demand trained officers having certain level of qualification and trained in specific fields like trained to quick response to threat and violence, Cardiac arrest quick response training, at these sites client pays extra €1.75 per hour for that officer. It’s a premium paid for the site and we know that if are moved off to other site we won’t get this pay at different site (work location). Generally, it motivates and makes us more engaged at working in these premium sites.

With this response, it was clear to the researcher that pay and benefits was one of the important driving force in employee engagement in Irish private security sector.

#### 4.9 Work life Balance.

Following on from this, when asked about does work life balance effect your engagement level. All the participants said yes it effects our engagement level. One of the participant stated, in the initial days of my career in private security sector it used impact my motivation level but now I am used to. As private security services is a 24 hours business and we don’t have an option to say no when we are asked to work at night, where in this used to affect our personal life to a great extent. But now we plan our breaks well in advance and try to manage work and family.

#### 4.10 Training and development

Following on, the researcher asked if training and development would affect their engagement levels. All the participants said yes training helps us to be more confident at work. It gives us a sense of empowerment. Majority of the leadership come from military background that means they're well trained and possess better operational skills. And getting trained by such expertise is always a value added component to our profile. Furthermore, when asked to the managers what's the feedback on training sessions. One of the manager stated, 'some officers face literacy issue they are not academically well educated and when they are offered training certification they are highly motivated to attend the sessions, because this is the only piece of paper they have in their life to show that they are good at something'. There was an incident one of the officer died out of heart attack while he was at work when I visited his house I saw the training certification framed in his living room it meant that much to him.

This reference made it clear to the researcher that training played a significant role in employee engagement in Irish private security sector.

#### 4.11 Career growth

Following on training and development when asked about career growth and its impact on employee engagement. One of the manager stated, career growth depends on the security officer how he likes to be seen or perceived as. We have bronze, silver and gold system. A new recruit will be starting his career as bronze and after certain level of training he will become silver and ultimately gold. We thought it would be good career path for the officers to grow in their career. As most of the senior management come from the military background the same good practice is translated here in the organization. We also recognize the best officer and nominate him/her as security officer of the year award. This gives officers a sense of pride.

One of the participant who plays role of security officer stated, there is always an opportunity to progress. When I see myself and lookback I have learnt lot of things from as basic as being a computer literate to certified security officer.

With these in-depth answers researcher was clear that security officer like to progress and grow in their domain and this is one of engaging factor in private security sector.

#### 4.12 Valued at work

Following on from Career growth, when asked do you feel valued at work. Especially in a case you always work at client location where in you are not a direct employee but a contract staff deployed for short term basis. All the participants positively said they feel valued at work. One participant stated that ‘Security is a product or service that lot of company don’t want, but they need have it’ however, our presence makes employees feel secure. “Especially at a location such as banks both customer and staff feel secure. If am on leave for 4 to 5 days people come back and ask why you were not around for some many days. I built a good relationship among the staff in work location. People need me as much as I need people. I love coming to work. People are so friendly especially in corporate offices”.

This illustrates the researcher that security officer feels they are valued at work, irrespective of the fact that they work in various locations.

#### 4.13 Recommendation to Improve Employee Engagement.

Coming to the final stage of the interviews all the participants were asked if there are any recommendations to be made to improve employee engagement in private security sector. All the participants felt there is scope for improving employee engagement and they suggested the below points.

“Regular interaction with the management team of parent organization. Security Officers felt they should not be seen just a number. Human interaction is very important”.

“Acknowledgement of their work, letter of appreciation from the managing director. It should not be a template signed by the managing director, it should specify the incident for which he/she is appreciated for. A tap on the back by the manager when excellent work is done means a lot”

as stated by one of the participant “there should be minimum age limit to join the private security sector, the reason being this job demands lot of maturity and we are here for a reason. young lads expect job from Monday to Friday, 8 hours jobs that’s very rare in security and often spending time using their mobile phones. This creates wrong culture and it effects the other colleague’s engagement levels”.

“Role based regular training makes security officer more empowered”

“There should be Improved communication between supervisor and security officer”

“Security officer working in remote location should be given right tool and devices to perform their duties”.

## Chapter 5 Discussion of results.

### 5.1 Relationship of result to research objective and Generalizability of research findings.

The objective of this study was to investigate the factors that influence employee engagement in Irish private security sector. Through this study the researcher brought together many concepts of engagement by referring to the International journal articles and books in an effort to comprehend the concept of employee engagement and its drivers. Furthermore, the researcher also discusses about strategic human resource management. The aim was to link strategy human resource management and employee engagement. As the rational of this thesis is to understand how HR systems (IT/ERP) can influence employee engagement and how by using design thinking strategy organizations can develop HR systems which influence employee engagement.

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the key findings as he delineated in chapter 4. The aim is to outline more holistic notion of engagement and its drivers and how management can influence engagement by using Design thinking strategy. The researcher will conclude this study by outlining the limitation and potential opportunity for further study. In final sub-section of this chapter the researcher will outline the estimated costing required to implement the HR systems in Irish private security sectors. The chapter will end with the personal learning statement that the researcher experienced during the study.

### 5.2 Work environment.

During the interview sessions, the participant's stated they feel more engaged when they work in modern office or corporate office environment. Because of the fact that in these environment

security officer finds people follow rules and regulations and they are more friendly and they have various tools and other application at their disposal to perform their duties. Danish,et al.,(2013) states that work environment plays a significant role in boosting engagement levels and commitment towards organization. A facilitative and favorable working conditions makes employees more comfortable to work and this can positively increase their motivational levels and can be more productive. However, in the private security business, security officer is asked work in remote location and night times where the environment may be not as favorable as the modern office space. In this situation, its management responsibility to facilitate tools and other technology enable application to create a favorable environment which help the security officer to perform his/her duties.

### 5.3 Leadership

As mentioned in the chapter 4, leadership plays a significant role in private security sector, managers are tasked to manage 50 to 70 security officers working in different location. Bucata and Rizesuc (2017) states that management plays significant role in functioning of the organization. Management should focus on people first and work together in teams. Strategy should be employee focused. In addition to increase the profitability of the business, managers are responsible to exhibit leadership skills which develops better team coordination and communication. Security officers stated that having a strong relationship that builds trust is very important in our business. This makes them feel more confident and engaged at work. This illustrates that leadership/management style is a vital driving force in employee engagement.

### 5.4 Communication

From the study, the researcher was able to establish that participants felt having an effective two-way communication system help to resolve issue. Especially in the private security sector where we can't predict threats and when it happens security officers need quick assistance to manage the situation, either reaching out to the control room or to the Garde depending on the level of threat. In this process in addition to resolving issue and effective communication builds interpersonal relationship among supervisor and teams. We can here correlate (Robinson, et al., 2004) who were of the opinion that an effective two-way communication raises engagement levels.

### 5.5 Team collaboration.

From the study, it is noted that team collaboration and cooperation plays a vital role in raising engagement levels at work. Especially considering the nature of job of security officers wherein they are deployed at different work locations and described by the participants they become part of the team where they work and their corporation and collaboration is essential in it does impact their engagement levels. The results are in conjunction of what Sridevi (2010) and Khan (1990) outlines supportive and trusting team promotes engagement levels.

### 5.6 Pay and benefits

Sridevi (2010) states that both financial and non-financial benefits motivate employees. When employees are recognized for their job and appreciated with rewards and more pay they tend to go that extra mile to increase their performance at work. There should be link between performance and benefits given to the employees. From the study, it is noted that security officers are paid basic minimum wages and when they have opportunity to work in premium sites where officers are paid €1.70 above the minimum wages which they are usually paid they are eager to work in these sites and also enroll themselves for addition training if needed. Thus, this illustrates that the pay and benefit is one of the major driving force to increase engagement levels at work.

### 5.7 Training and development

Sridevi (2010) outlines that appropriate training helps employees to improve their skills and knowledge. As a result, they feel more confident at work. Training helps employees to know their job more there by this helps them to work without supervision. Working without supervision increases commitment at work. These are signs to increase engagement levels. In private security sector where officers work in different work location and majority of time they are supervised it is important that they are well trained to handle the situation independently. Through the study the researcher investigated that training was a key driver of employee engagement in private security sector. For security officer training was not just a tool or technique which helps them to perform their job better it was qualification which they are proud off.

## 5.8 Career Growth

Significant attention has been given to linkage of employee engagement which results in career growth. Robertson-smith and Markwick (2009) states that engagement provides an opportunity to employee's progress in their work, which creates a sense of self efficacy. The consequence of engagement is career growth, positive feelings. This is in agreement as one of the participant stated over last 10 years of experience as security officer not only I have moved by in my career ladder as a security officer in addition to that I have grown holistically by learning life skills and I feel more educated now.

This illustrates that in private security sector career growth is a key driving factor in employee engagement.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion.

The main aim and objective of this study is to examine the factors that influence employee engagement in Irish private security sector. The researcher was curious to find out the theoretical and practical implications of drivers of employee engagement.

The researcher was able to find out that there is a correlation between Sridevi (2010) , Anitha's (2014) the key drivers of employee engagement and those discussed by security officers. In literature review the researcher brought together the concept of employee engagement from two disciplines, the academic scholars, the consultant practitioners. This gave the study a multi-dimensional view of the concept.

The study also revealed six key themes as drivers of employee engagement. Two-way communication, training and development, pay and benefits emerged as the prominent drivers of employee engagement in Irish private security sector.

Bucata and Rizesuc (2017) outlines that communication management is a form of interpersonal leadership. It enables and empowers managers in forecasting, training, and exercise organizational control. The participants felt the need of communication and human interaction as one of the participant mentioned in the interview they should not be just seen as numbers.

All the participants emphasized on the need of training and development. Training was not just a tool which empowers them to work, participants felt it was a qualification for them which they were proud off. As both organization and employees are both interdependent to achieve organizational goal and objectives training should not be a onetime exercise it should be ongoing process and employee engagement should be integrated into the culture of the organization, which enable continuous learning, improvement and action. By fulfilling employee expectation organization can create a positive impact on employee performance, which directly results in improvement in organization's performance (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

Furthermore, Designing HR strategy which will help to drive bottom line workforce and harness the top line leadership. Bold and innovative systems which focus on Talent, Learning, leadership and HR technology is the future ahead. The new wave of digital technology helps to increase transparency and using new data information's coming from various applications and hand-held

devices are helping to improve work practices. The predictions are that people analytics will evolve in the HR function which helps in producing decision making information to the management. Through these applications HR departments are developing valuable database of employee's feedbacks and their experience at work, which also helps in developing employees career succession planning. All these data facts are used to identify specific solutions to the problems faced in the day to day operations of the business. Organizations experiencing these benefits of HR system and are investing heavily on true systems of engagement v/s systems of records. This trend is the cornerstone of '*Design thinking*' strategy which is studying the problems, needs, behaviours, and feedbacks received from various data sources and analysis, designing solutions to the problems which helps and enables employees being better engaged. The new Design tools and technique and analytics have encouraged the leadership in understanding the changing trends and how to keep pace with it. Employee engagement has become the primary focus of the leadership.

#### 6.1 Limitation of the research.

The research has few limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 6 was small, a larger sample size would have given more remarkable results. Secondly, the response rate of the participants to participate in an interview for dissertation purpose was very low, one of the reason being security officers had no or very less time during their working hours and was difficult to take time out and to talk to the researcher, and they have only one day leave during the weekdays which they are busy with their personal commitments. the researcher was in anticipation of interviewing wide a range of security personnel playing different roles in the security to gain different perspectives, when approached only few accepted the invitation to participate in the interviews.

#### 6.2 Implication of future research.

The concept of employee engagement is evolving. In this study only the drivers of engagement has taken the center focus, the researcher would be interested to study on the other areas of employee engagement. Secondly, though the concept of Design thinking is in use since early 90's but used highly implemented in manufacturing sectors. This concept is emerging in the field of

HR and there is great scope for further research on its use and applications. With limited availability of time and resources, researchers consider small sample size, there is greater scope to use large pool and use mixed method approach, both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. This may bring out new understanding of employee engagement.

### 6.3 Recommendation and costing.

As any other management decision, employee engagement decision can be evaluated both in terms of cost and benefits. In the study, participants emphasized communication, training and development, team collaboration were the key driving forces of employee engagement. In order to improve communication mechanism using HR software and application, supervisor and security officer can connect and communicate between each other. This way they can bridge the gap/lack of interaction. Furthermore, security officer can log all his incidents reported during the day and this can be reviewed by the supervisor. As private security business runs 24/7, every incident can be updated through HR systems.

HR systems can also be used to facilitate online training courses, making employee handbooks available online for employee reference.

These kinds of robust HR systems would cost the organization between €15 to €20 per employee, per month. The researcher was personally involved in developing similar HR software application which caters the needs of private security sector which cost €20 per employee, per month.

#### 6.4 CIPD personal learning statement

This dissertation was very demanding and challenging, as it was a struggle to balance family life, academia and work, but in the end it feels a profound sense of reward and understanding. Primarily, reading extensively on various HR topics and concepts gave me insight and deep understanding which is required for a HR professional. Reading through various journal articles has become a habit now.

During the process of completing this thesis, I see a lot of improvement in my reading speed and comprehending skills. Though there is scope for improvement in comparison I feel my writing skills have improved.

This thesis has introduced me to a new industry, the private security sector. Having completed interviews and interacting with security officers to Directors in this industry has built my interpersonal skills to a great extent.

As a result of this thesis the author understands the importance of research and methods of collecting data, analyzing and critical thinking.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 Information Sheet.

### **Information Sheet**

**Topic:** *Design Thinking as a strategy in employee engagement in the Irish Private Security Sector*

This research study aims to generate substantial data on the perception of Security Personnel and the impact of HR Strategies in employee engagement.

The researcher is Prabhu Swamy, studying for a Masters degree at National College of Ireland (NCI), in the school of business. The research is being supervised by Desmond Gargan, a senior academic at the National College of Ireland.

### **INVITATION**

The researcher has invited you because of your position as a security professional working in the Irish private security sector.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you should feel free to cease your participation at any stage if you wish..

### **What is required of you?**

You are requested to attend an interview at a place and time that suits you. It will be an open interview that will take approximately 45 minutes in duration. Notes and recordings may take place but note that this is subject to your approval prior to the commencement of the interview.

To ensure accuracy and understanding of some of the information received, there might be a requirement for a short follow-up interview. The data collected will only be viewed by myself and my supervisor.

### **Risks to you for participating:**

There are no perceived potential risk whatsoever associated with this research, however, should you feel that you can no longer want to participate in the interview, you may of course withdraw at any stage.

You are free to withdraw your involvement and the information supplied during the interview and subsequent to the interview at any time up to the data being anonymized.

**What happens to the information supplied by you?**

The information you supplied is for use in this research work only and will not be forwarded to any third party or shared with any other participants or agency for use in any form. All data will be treated as confidential and no names, family details, or any form of identification will be used. The data will be stored in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects) from the date of completion of the project itself.

**Further Information:**

Should you have any queries regarding this research or any information contained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at [prabhuTranz@gmail.com](mailto:prabhuTranz@gmail.com) or phone +353 (0)899860511.

Please see the attached invitation, and I would request you sign and return it to me at your convenience. This information sheet maybe kept by you.

Prabhu Swamy

## Appendix 2 Consent Form **Consent Form**

### Acceptance

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
4. I understand that the study involves an interview and that notes and recording may take place with my consent, and the interview will take approximately 45 minutes in duration
5. I understand that participation involves no foreseeable risks to me, and that the information given to me has been explained in details.
6. I understand that all research data will be stored at a secured location for 1 year from the date of publication of the study result, and will then be destroyed unless I give permission for my data to be archived. I agree to have my study data archived.      Yes                      No
7. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction
8. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purpose of the research.
9. I understand that the result of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.
10. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time up to the data being anonymized, without any effect.

Participant's name: .....

Participant's signature: .....

Date: .....

**Statement by PrabhuSwamy**

The participant has received the information Sheet where my details have been provided. All of the participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this research project.

Researcher: Prabhu Swamy

Signature: .....

Date

### Appendix 3 Interview Questions

1. To start, we would like you to describe your journey as a security officer?  
Year of experience, Role...
2. Why did you choose your career in private security sector?
3. As you are deployed in different work location, how do you interact with your organization environment?
4. How organization changes are communicated to you, likes of change in policies and procedure etc?
5. How does work-life balance effect your levels of engagement ?
6. How often you communicate with your supervisor/ Manager & colleagues ?
7. Do you think having a positive relationship between senior management effects your engagement level?
8. As your deployed in client location, do you feel you are valued ?
9. How does your work environment effect your engagement level ?
10. What factors influence your involvement/ engagement level ?
11. What do you think makes you: engaged, not engaged or disengaged in work?
12. How does training and development effect your engagement level?
13. Do you think management has an effect on your levels of engagement ?
14. Do you have any recommendation which improves the engagement level in private security sector ?

## Appendix 4 Interview Transcripts

1.To start, we would like you to describe your journey as a security officer? Year of experience, Role...

well I have been in the private security sector for the last 10 years and prior to that I was on various sites, shops, buildings sites and this is totally different we are more connected to the people which are working with on a daily basis, you are dealing with them and you talking to them and this is a friendly atmosphere.

Mostly controlling the flow of people in and out, that's it. The building I look after, It's the right people that are coming into the in and out of the building no strangers only clients or staff.

2.Why did you choose your career in private security sector?

Well basically I was in retail for a number of years and I got the opportunity to come in to the banking site which opened up a lot of new things in me as a person dealing with people and so on the different aspectss of the as a security as in the computers, the cameras the space I have been here I had to go and do courses education through it different things that I needed.

3.As you are deployed in different work location, how do you interact with your organization environment?

Well, each site has a supervisor and he does the daily running of the businesses and the sites and he is onto his manager and he is not too far away and there is a general manager in a lot of buildings so it's a network. we deal with our supervisor he deals with the manager which he forwards any of our complaint and anything we need as in equipment. we are in daily contact with each other if we need.

4. How organization changes are communicated to you, likes of change in policies and procedure etc?

Its only through phone or emails. That's how we keep contact. Because he is fairly busy. He is on new ball everyday He is Not only dealing with our building he is dealing with another 20 so its emails, phone calls. if we can get him on the phone that's great but can't always get him on phone we email him. But he always gets back to us as soon as he can he is fairly busy. A you know.

5. How does work-life balance effect your levels of engagement?

Well I was always on nights and I got used to do doing nights its option of your body, your eating habits your sleeping habits its fairly hard to do I have done it for a number of years and I got used to it but then I was offered days as I was getting older I wanted the days it took the days it took me months to get me body back to normal way back to sleep pattern eating that's back to normal now. I am actually sleeping a lot better now. One year on nights you cant really get into a mode, you stay awake you get to home you will only sleep for 2 3 hours and you are awake so you are awake you are awake for 21 hours you know what I mean and it cant hang your body but there are ways and means the job when I started has the how and what to do how to eat what time to eat what time to sleep and how to prepare to sleep you know what I mean.

6. How is your engagement at work, what's your motivation levels.

Well here like take I am on 7 to 7 today right I got up at 4.15 in the morning I leave my house at about 5.15 and I am in here by 6.30 I have been awake and am ready for the day. the first hour here you are setting up , you are reading the emails, you are looking at the cameras you are setting up your day here, your supervisor will tell you what patrols to do over here you have different things to look after, electrics, you have loads of things to keep you busy here in the day you know I mean if you were just sitting at a desk for 12 hours there is no motivation to come in, we have patrols to do as I said we have plant rooms we have camera system we have fire system to look after and is done on a regular basis here 24/7 I am not the only one to do, the night man comes in at 7 o'clock he will have the same thing to do. We have a lot of things to do different things, each day to check out so my work load is varied I don't only just walk at this site also outside around the corner and is totally different set up you know what I mean you are more on a desk or say you could be under near the car park or you could be patrolling for them 12 hours or 10 hours a day.

It totally varies where you are. If you go into a shop here on your feet for 12 hours it is not nice, walking around the floor, watching thieves that might be and this one the other. And that's not a nice job this is a lot better.

7. How does interacting with people that makes difference in your role.

Oh big time, big time because I have been onsite where people would not, countries change every year. I have worked with Indian, Pakistani African you name it I have worked with different culture different lifestyle it gives you an insight as to their lives I find it quite interesting.

8. How do you think keeping in regular touch with your supervisor or manager? Does that increases your motivation/engagement level. Is that anyway helps you?

Well on the site you have a site supervisor, no matter what site you are on. They are linked to the manager few can get through to the manager, you go with your troubles to him or whatever it is and he will send of the email you know, we have daily contact and Chris is over here he is not too far he comes over here to check what we need.

9. Do you think having a positive relationship between senior management effects your engagement level?

I can talk to him, I am at security for 38 years and I have worked on sites that you can not, could not even go to them.

Once you are there done your job, end of story there was no one to check. The security industry here has changed so much in the last 10-15 years compared to it was the year ago.

10. in your opinion a positive relationship with your senior management will that help your engagement level?

Yeah its needed, its there

11. As you deployed in different locations as you said do you feel your valued in a specific site, what does it means to you.

Well take it here now, I am only here a year and I have met so many people here and other sites and I have daily contacts get to notice different staff different buildings they talk to me I talk to them, some of them have problems. I know when I am not here people I talked to if I am gone out for five days where were you so same around the corner, like I do four buildings in this vicinity, so I know lot more staff than my supervisor here or any other sites that I do. They see how close I am with people and they can't understand that. they are old enough to be my kids, my kids are in 40, late 30s. I don't know whether it's a fact or figure that they relate to but I have good rapport with them. I like that part of motivation coming into work is a such an interaction you have with good people.

12. What factors influence your involvement/ engagement level ?

What motivates me is actually the people are in here, they are very friendly I enjoy coming in. if I have a problem I can go to them and as well as they come to me and the part and parcel of the thing is its people need me as much as I need people and which we can relate and share the problem if there is a problem. What I love coming in to work if you want to understand why it's the people that I work with they are actually nice to work with.

13. What do you think makes you: engaged, not engaged or disengaged in work?

I was never dis engaged, I found very hard to switch job

14. How does training and development effect your engagement level?

I have had the training on for the years that's for the health and safety, how to do fire planning, I can call back about 15 year ago when I actually started to change and you had to use computers I only had basics of computer knowledge but then I found out there is changes of so much I have actually done a course for six months to get me driving license. You don't want the CLV. Then I was hooked on to laptop, that was never option. but it's the part and parcel of the job now and we

have to use it we can progress if we have something to say we can to our manager and say that other way to do its there that we can upgrade ourselves each year. Its good.

15. Do you think management has an effect on your levels of engagement ?

I will tell you, when I came to G4S first I hate about them, I have been to different companies all these years so many different types so many guys very badly run, most of them run for the money. I was told about G4S I put in the application, and I got the job and from the day one of the interview they told what I was not and how to go about it but I actually progressed because of them, if you want to go with the management its there to help I am quite happy with the way I am.

16. Do you have any recommendation which improves the engagement level in private security sector?

I see my education level has went up since I came into this security industry, because I have seen another level, we see young people now who are in 18-21 coming in doing this, they don't want to do it, they don't want to sit in a chair, they want Monday to Friday and an 8 hour shift that's very rare in security and mentally they should have any company should not have under the age of 30 doing security as there are not interested. There are aspects that different companies look. But when we see a problem we report it, it has helped it not all the time but majority of times it has helped it. They should look after the age difference now because these issues are coming in.

But he should be trained and should have basic knowledge coming into the industry most of them don't have. They would need to see how is their probation. That's a big issue. What they should look up is the age group and they should have basic knowledge of the security coming in to report not just anybody walking on the street which a lot of them are doing now don't know their background, don't know whether they hold the license or not, he should be trained before putting on site.